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G BRAMBLE

BY ANDRÉ MAUROIS

GENERAL BRAMBLE

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BY

ANDRÉ MAUROIS
Author of "The Silence of Colonel Bramble"

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH BY
JULES CASTIER AND RONALD BOSWELL

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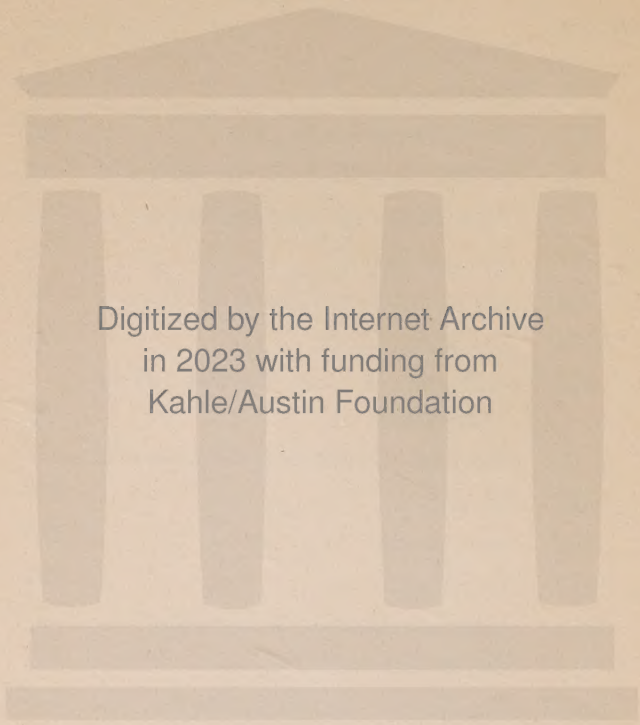
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GENERAL BRAMBLE

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CHAPTER I

PORTRAITS

"As to what the picture represents, that depends upon who looks at it."—WHISTLER.

THE French Mission in its profound wisdom had sent as liaison officer to the Scottish Division a captain of Dragoons whose name was Beltara.

"Are you any relation to the painter, sir?" Aurelle, the interpreter, asked him.

"What did you say?" said the dragoon. "Say that again, will you? You *are* in the army, aren't you? You are a soldier, for a little time at any rate? and you claim to know that such people as painters exist? You actually admit the existence of that God-forsaken species?"

And he related how he had visited the French War Office after he had been wounded, and how an old colonel had made friends with him and had tried to find him a congenial job.

"What's your profession in civilian life, *capitaine?*" the old man had asked as he filled in a form.

"I am a painter, sir."

"A painter?" the colonel exclaimed, dumbfounded. "A painter? Why, damn it all!"

And after thinking it over for a minute he added, with the kindly wink of an accomplice in crime, "Well, let's put down *nil,* eh? It won't look quite so silly."

. . . . .

Captain Beltara and Aurelle soon became inseparable companions. They had the same tastes and different professions, which is the ideal recipe for friendship. Aurelle admired the sketches in which the

painter recorded the flexible lines of the Flemish landscape; Beltara was a kindly critic of the young man's rather feeble verses.

"You would perhaps be a poet," he said to him, "if you were not burdened with a certain degree of culture. An artist must be an idiot. The only perfect ones are the sculptors; then come the landscape painters; then painters in general; after them the writers. The critics are not at all stupid; and the really intelligent men never do anything."

"Why shouldn't intelligence have an art of its own, as sensibility has?"

"No, my friend, no. Art is a game; intelligence is a profession. Look at me, for instance; now that I no longer touch my brushes, I sometimes actually catch myself thinking; it's quite alarming."

"You ought to paint some portraits here, *mon capitaine*. Aren't you tempted?

These sunburnt British complexions ——"

"Of course, my boy, it is tempting; but I haven't got my things with me. Besides, would they consent to sit?"

"Of course they would, for as long as you like. To-morrow I'll bring round young Dundas, the aide-de-camp. He's got nothing to do; he'll be delighted."

. . . . .

Next day Beltara made a three-crayon sketch of Lieutenant Dundas. The young aide-de-camp turned out quite a good sitter; all he asked was to be allowed to do something, which meant shouting his hunting cries, cracking his favourite whip and talking to his dog.

"Ah," said Aurelle, at the end of the sitting, "I like that immensely — really. It's so lightly touched — it's a mere nothing, and yet the whole of England is there."

And, waving his hands with the ritual gestures of the infatuated picture-lover, he

praised the artlessness of the clear, wide eyes, the delightful freshness of the complexion, and the charming candour of the smile.

But the Cherub planted himself in front of his portrait, struck the classical pose of the golfer, and, poising his arms and hitting at an imaginary ball, pronounced judgment on the work of art with perfect frankness.

"My God," he said, "what an awful thing! How the deuce did you see, old man, that my breeches were laced at the side?"

"What on earth can that matter?" asked Aurelle, annoyed.

"Matter! Would *you* like to be painted with your nose behind your ear? My God! It's about as much like me as it is like Lloyd George."

"Likeness is quite a secondary quality," said Aurelle condescendingly. "The interesting thing is not the individual; it is the type, the synthesis of a whole race or class."

"In the days when I was starving in my native South," said the painter, "I used to paint portraits of tradesmen's wives for a fiver. When I had done, the family assembled for a private view. 'Well,' said the husband, 'it's not so bad; but what about the likeness, eh? You put it in afterwards, I suppose?' 'The likeness?' I indignantly replied. 'The likeness? My dear sir, I am a painter of ideals; I don't paint your wife as she is, I paint her as she ought to be. Your wife? Why, you see her every day — she cannot interest you. But my painting — ah, you never saw anything like my painting!' And the tradesman was convinced, and went about repeating in every café on the Cannebière, 'Beltara, *mon bon,* is the painter of ideals; he does not paint my wife as she is, he paints her as she ought to be.'"

"Well," interrupted young Lieutenant Dundas, "if you can make my breeches

lace in front, I should be most grateful. I look like a damned fool as it is now!"

. . . . .

The following week Beltara, who had managed to get hold of some paints, made excellent studies in oil of Colonel Parker and Major Knight. The major, who was stout, found his corporation somewhat exaggerated.

"Yes," said the painter, "but with the varnish, you know ——"

And with an expressive movement of his hands he made as if to restore the figure to more normal dimensions.

The colonel, who was lean, wanted to be padded out.

"Yes," said Beltara, "but with the varnish, you know ——"

And his hands, moving back again, gave promise of astonishing expansions.

Having regained a taste for his profession, he tried his hand at some of the finest

types in the Division. His portraits met with various verdicts; each model thought his own rotten and the others excellent.

The Divisional Squadron Commander found his boots badly polished. The C.R.E. commented severely on the important mistakes in the order of his ribbons; the Legion of Honour being a foreign order should not have preceded the Bath, and the Japanese Rising Sun ought to have followed the Italian Order for Valour.

The only unqualified praise came from the sergeant-major who acted as chief clerk to General Bramble. He was a much-beribboned old warrior with a head like a faun and three red hairs on top of it. He had the respectful familiarity of the underling who knows he is indispensable, and he used to come in at all times of the day and criticize the captain's work.

"That's fine, sir," he would say, "that's fine."

After some time he asked Aurelle whether

the captain would consent "to take his photo." The request was accepted, for the old N.C.O.'s beacon-like countenance tempted the painter, and he made a kindly caricature.

"Well, sir," the old soldier said to him, "I've seen lots of photographer chaps the likes of you — I've seen lots at fairs in Scotland — but I've never seen one as gives you a portrait so quick."

He soon told General Bramble of the painter's prowess; and as he exercised a respectful but all-powerful authority over the general, he persuaded him to come and give the French liaison officer a sitting.

The general proved an admirable model of discipline. Beltara, who was very anxious to be successful in this attempt, demanded several sittings. The general arrived punctually, took up his pose with charming deliberation, and when the painter had done, said "Thank you," with a smile,

and went away without saying another word.

"Look here," Beltara said to Aurelle, "does this bore him or not? He hasn't come one single time to look at what I have done. I can't understand it."

"He'll look at it when you've finished," Aurelle replied. "I'm sure he's delighted, and he'll let you see it when the time comes."

As a matter of fact after the last sitting, when the painter had said "Thank you, sir, I think I could only spoil it now," the general slowly descended from the platform, took a few solemn steps round the easel, and stared at his portrait for some minutes.

"Humph!" he said at length, and left the room.

. . . . .

Dr. O'Grady, who was a man of real artistic culture, seemed somehow to understand that keeping decorations in their correct order is not the only criterion of the

beauty of a portrait. The grateful Beltara proposed to make a sketch of him, and during the sitting was pleased to find himself in agreement with the doctor upon many things.

"The main point," said the painter, "is to see simply — outlines, general masses. The thing is not to copy nature with childish minuteness."

"No, of course not," replied the doctor. "Besides, it can't be done."

"Of course it can't, because nature is so endlessly full of details which can never all be considered. The thing is to suggest their presence."

"Quite so," said the doctor.

But when he came to gaze upon the face he loved so well, and saw it transformed into outlines and general masses, he seemed a little surprised.

"Well, of course," he said, "it is excellent — oh, it's very, very good — but don't you think you have made me a little too old?

I have no lines at the corner of my mouth, and my hair is not quite so thin."

He appealed to the aide-de-camp who was just then passing by.

"Dundas, is this like me?"

"Certainly, Doc; but it's ten years younger."

The doctor's smile darkened, and he began rather insistently to praise the Old Masters.

"Modern painting," he proclaimed, "is too brutal."

"Good heavens," said Aurelle, "a great artist cannot paint with a powder-puff; you must be able to feel that the fellow with the pencil was not a eunuch."

"Really," he went on, when the doctor had left in rather a bad temper, "he's as ridiculous as the others. I think his portrait is very vigorous, and not in the least a skit, whatever he may say."

"Just sit down there a minute, old man," said the painter. "I shall be jolly glad to

work from an intelligent model for once. They all want to look like tailors' fashion-plates. Now, I can't change my style; I don't paint in beauty paste, I render what I see — it's like Diderot's old story about the amateur who asked a floral painter to portray a lion. 'With pleasure,' said the artist, 'but you may expect a lion that will be as like a rose as I can make him.'"

The conversation lasted a long time; it was friendly and technical. Aurelle praised Beltara's painting; Beltara expressed his joy at having found so penetrating and artistic a critic in the midst of so many Philistines.

"I prefer your opinion to a painter's; it's certainly sincerer. Would you mind turning your profile a bit more towards me? Some months before the war I had two friends in my studio to whom I wished to show a little picture I intended for the *Salon*. 'Yes,' said the younger of them, 'it's all right, but there ought to be a light

spot in that corner; your lights are not well balanced.' 'Shut up, you fool,' the other whispered to him, 'that'll make it *really* good!' Come on, old man, come and look; I think that sketch can be left as it is."

Aurelle walked up to the painter, and, cocking his head on one side, looked at the drawing.

"It's charming," he said at last with some reluctance. "It's charming. There are some delightful touches — all that still life on the table, it might be a Chardin — and I like the background very much indeed."

"Well, old man, I'm glad you like it. Take it back with you when you go on leave and give it to your wife."

"Er — " sighed Aurelle, "thank you, *mon capitaine;* it's really very kind of you. Only — you'll think me no end of a fool — you see, if it is to be for my wife, I'd like you to touch up the profile just a little. Of course you understand."

And Beltara, who was a decent fellow,

adorned his friend's face with the Grecian nose and the small mouth which the gods had denied him.

CHAPTER II

DIPLOMACY

"We are not foreigners; we are English; it is *you* that are foreigners."—AN ENGLISH LADY ABROAD.

WHEN Dr. O'Grady and Aurelle had succeeded, with some difficulty, in obtaining a room from old Madame de Vauclère, Colonel Parker went over to see them and was charmed with the château and the park.

France and England, he said, were the only two countries in which fine gardens were to be found, and he told the story of the American who asked the secret of those well-mown lawns and was answered, "Nothing is simpler: water them for twelve hundred years."

Then he inquired timidly whether he also might not be quartered at the château.

"It wouldn't do very well, sir; Madame is mortally afraid of new-comers, and she has a right, being a widow, to refuse to billet you."

"Aurelle, my boy, do be a good fellow, and go and arrange matters."

After much complaining, Madame de Vauclère consented to put the colonel up: all her sons were officers, and she could not withstand sentimental arguments for very long.

The next day Parker's orderly joined the doctor's in the château kitchen, and together they annexed the fireplace. To make room for their own utensils, they took down a lot of comical little French articles, removed what they saw no use for, put the kettle on, and whistled hymns as they filled the cupboards with tins of boot polish in scientifically graded rows.

After adoring them on the first day, putting up with them on the second, and cursing them on the third, the old cook came up

to Aurelle with many lamentations, and dwelt at some length on the sad state of her saucepans; but she found the interpreter dealing with far more serious problems.

Colonel Parker, suddenly realizing that it was inconvenient for the general to be quartered away from his Staff, had decided to transfer the whole H.Q. to the château of Vauclère.

"Explain to the old lady that I want a very good room for the general, and the billiard-room for our clerks."

"Why, it's impossible, sir; she has no good room left."

"What about her own?" said Colonel Parker.

Madame de Vauclère, heart-broken, but vanquished by the magic word "General," which Aurelle kept on repeating sixty times a minute, tearfully abandoned her canopied bed and her red damask chairs, and took refuge on the second floor.

Meanwhile the drawing-room with its

ancient tapestries was filled with an army of phlegmatic clerks occupied in heaping up innumerable cases containing the history in triplicate of the Division, its men, horses, arms and achievements.

"Maps" set up his drawing-board on a couple of arm-chairs; "Intelligence" concealed their secrets in an Aubusson boudoir; and the telephone men sauntered about in the dignified, slow, bantering fashion of the British workman. They set up their wires in the park, and cut branches off the oaks and lime trees; they bored holes in the old walls, and, as they wished to sleep near their work, they put up tents on the lawns.

The Staff asked for their horses; and the animals were picketed in the garden walks, as the stables were too small. In the garden the Engineers made a dug-out in case of a possible bombardment. The orderlies' football developed a distinct liking for the window-panes of the summer-house. The park assumed the aspect first of a building

site and then of a training camp, and newcomers said, "These French gardens *are* badly kept!"

This methodical work of destruction had been going on for about a week when "Intelligence" got going.

"Intelligence" was represented at the Division by Captain Forbes.

Forbes, who had never yet arrested a real spy, saw potential spies everywhere, and as he was fond of the company of the great, he always made his suspicions a pretext for going to see General Bramble or Colonel Parker. One day he remained closeted for an hour with the colonel, who summoned Aurelle as soon as he had left.

"Do you know," he said to him, "there are most dangerous things going on here. Two old women are constantly being seen in this château. What the deuce are they up to?"

"What do you mean?" gasped Aurelle.

"This is their house, sir; it's Madame de Vauclère and her maid."

"Well, you go and tell them from me to clear out as soon as possible. The presence of civilians among a Staff cannot be tolerated; the Intelligence people have complained about it, and they are perfectly right."

"But where are they to go to, sir?"

"That's no concern of mine."

Aurelle turned round furiously and left the room. Coming across Dr. O'Grady in the park, he asked his advice about the matter.

"Why, doctor, she had a perfect right to refuse to billet us, and from a military point of view we should certainly be better off at Nieppe. She was asked to do us a favour, she grants it, and her kindness is taken as a reason for her expulsion! I can't 'evacuate her to the rear,' as Forbes would say; she'd die of it!"

"I should have thought," said the doctor, "that after three years you knew the British temperament better than this. Just go and tell the colonel, politely and firmly, that you refuse to carry out his orders. Then depict Madame de Vauclère's situation in your grandest and most tragic manner. Tell him her family has been living in the château for the last two thousand years, that one of her ancestors came over to England with William the Conqueror, and that her grandfather was a friend of Queen Victoria's. Then the colonel will apologize and place a whole wing at the disposal of your *protégée.*"

Dr. O'Grady's prescription was carried out in detail by Aurelle with most satisfactory results.

"You are right," said the colonel, "Forbes is a damned idiot. The old lady can stay on, and if anybody annoys her, let her come to me."

"It's all these servants who are such a

nuisance to her, sir," said Aurelle. "It's very painful for her to see her own house turned upside-down."

"Upside-down?" gasped the colonel. "Why, the house is far better kept than it was in her time. I have had the water in the cisterns analysed; I have had sweet-peas planted and the tennis lawn rolled. What can she complain of?"

In the well-appointed kitchen garden, where stout-limbed pear trees bordered square beds of sprouting lettuce, Aurelle joined O'Grady.

"Doctor, you're a great man, and my old lady is saved. But it appears she ought to thank her lucky stars for having placed her under the British Protectorate, which, in exchange for her freedom, provides her with a faultless tennis lawn and microbeless water."

"There is nothing," said the doctor gravely, "that the British Government is not ready to do for the good of the natives."

CHAPTER III

THE TOWER OF BABEL

"Des barques romaines, disais-je.—
Non, disais-tu, portugaises."—
JEAN GIRAUDOUX.

"WOT you require, sir," interrupted Private Brommit, "is a glass o' boilin' 'ot milk an' whisky, with lots o' cinnamon."

Aurelle, who was suffering from an attack of influenza, was at Estrées, under the care of Dr. O'Grady, who tirelessly prescribed ammoniated quinine.

"I say, doctor," said the young Frenchman, "this is a drug that's utterly unknown in France. It seems strange that medicines should have a nationality."

"Why shouldn't they?" said the doctor. "Many diseases are national. If a Frenchman has a bathe after a meal, he is stricken

with congestion of the stomach and is drowned. An Englishman never has congestion of the stomach."

"No," said Aurelle; "he is drowned all the same, but his friends say he had cramp, and the honour of Britain is saved."

Private Brommit knocked at the door and showed in Colonel Parker, who sat down by the bed and asked Aurelle how he was getting on.

"He is much better," said the doctor; "a few more doses of quinine ——"

"I am glad to hear that," replied the colonel, "because I shall want you, Aurelle. G.H.Q. is sending me on a mission for a fortnight to one of your Brittany ports; I am to organize the training of the Portuguese Division. I have orders to take an interpreter with me. I thought of you for the job."

"But," Aurelle put in, "I don't know a word of Portuguese."

"What does that matter?" said the

colonel. "You're an interpreter, aren't you? Isn't that enough?"

. . . . .

The following day Aurelle told his servant to try and find a Portuguese in the little town of Estrées.

"Brommit is an admirable fellow," said Colonel Parker, "he found whisky for me in the middle of the bush, and quite drinkable beer in France. If I say to him, 'Don't come back without a Portuguese,' he is sure to bring one with him, dead or alive."

As a matter of fact, that very evening he brought back with him a nervous, talkative little man.

"Ze Poortooguez in fifteen days," exclaimed the little man, gesticulating freely with his small plump hands. "A language so rich, so flexible, in fifteen days! Ah, you have ze luck, young man, to 'ave found in zis town Juan Garretos, of Portalègre, Master of Arts of ze University of Coimbra,

and positivist philosopher. Ze Poortooguez in fifteen days! Do you know at least ze Low Latin? ze Greek? ze Hebrew? ze Arabic? ze Chinese? If not, it is useless to go furzer."

Aurelle confessed his ignorance.

"Never mind," said Juan Garretos indulgently; "ze shape of your 'ead inspire me wiz confidence: for ten francs ze hour I accept you. Only, mind, no chattering; ze Latins always talk too much. Not a single word of ze English between us now. *Faz favor d'fallar Portuguez* — do me ze favour of speaking ze Poortooguez. Know first zat, in ze Poortooguez, one speak in ze zird person. You must call your speaker 'Excellency.'"

"What's that?" Aurelle interrupted. "I thought you had just had a democratic revolution."

"Precisely," said the positivist philosopher, wringing his little hands, "precisely. In France you made ze revoluçaoung in

order zat every man should be called 'citizen.' What a waste of energy! In Poortugal we made ze revoluçaoung in order zat every man should be called 'His Highness.' Instead of levelling down we levelled up. It is better. Under ze old order ze children of ze poor were *rapachos,* and zose of ze aristocracy were *meninos:* now zey are all *meninos.* Zat is a revoluçaoung! *Faz favor d'fallar Portuguez.* Ze Latins always talk too much."

Having thus earned his ten francs by an hour's unceasing eloquence, he made a fairer proposal to Aurelle next day.

"I will arrange with you for a fixed sum," he said. "If I teach you two souzand words, you give me fifty francs."

"Very well," replied Aurelle, "two thousand words will be a sufficient vocabulary to begin with."

"All right," said Juan Garretos; "now listen to me. All ze words which in ze English end with 'tion' are ze same in ze

Poortooguez wiz ze ending 'çaoung.' Revolution — *revoluçaoung;* constitution — *constituçaoung;* inquisition — *inquisiçaoung.* Now zere are in ze English two souzand words ending in 'tion.' Your Excellency owes me fifty francs. *Faz favor d'fallar Portuguez.*"

. . . . .

A fortnight later Colonel Parker and Aurelle stepped on to the platform at B——, where they were met by Major Baraquin, the officer commanding the garrison, and Captain Pereira, the Portuguese liaison officer.

Major Baraquin was a very old soldier. He had seen service — in the 1870 campaign. All strangers, Allies included, inspired him with a distrust which even his respect for his superiors failed to remove. When the French War Office ordered him to place his barracks at the disposal of a British colonel, discipline required him to

obey, but hostile memories inspired him with savage resistance.

"After all, sir," said Aurelle to Parker, "his grandfather was at Waterloo."

"Are you quite sure," asked the colonel, "that he was not there himself?"

Above all things, Major Baraquin would never admit that the armies of other nations might have different habits from his own. That the British soldier should eat jam and drink tea filled him with generous indignation.

"The colonel," Aurelle translated, "requests me to ask you . . ."

"No, no, NO," replied Major Baraquin in stentorian tones, without troubling to listen any further.

"But it will be necessary, sir, for the Portuguese who are going to land. . . ."

"No, no, NO, I tell you," Major Baraquin repeated, resolved upon ignoring demands which he considered subversive and

childish. This refrain was as far as he ever got in his conversations with Aurelle.

. . . . .

Next day several large British transports arrived, and disgorged upon the quay thousands of small, black-haired men who gazed mournfully upon the alien soil. It was snowing, and most of them were seeing snow for the first time in their lives. They wandered about in the mud, shivering in their spotted blue cotton uniforms and dreaming, no doubt, of sunny Alemtejo.

"They'll fight well," said Captain Pereira, "they'll fight well. Wellington called them his fighting cocks, and Napoleon said his Portuguese legion made the best troops in the world. But can you wonder they are sad?"

Each of them had brought with him a pink handkerchief containing his collection of souvenirs — little reminders of his village, his people, or his best girl — and when

they were told that they could not take their pink parcels with them to the front, there was a heart-breaking outcry.

Major Baraquin, with unconscious and sinister humour, had quartered them in the shambles.

"It would be better ——" began Colonel Parker.

"Il vaudrait peut-être mieux ——" Aurelle attempted to translate.

"Vossa Excellencia ——" began Captain Pereira.

"No, no, NO," said the old warrior passionately.

The Portuguese went to the shambles.

CHAPTER IV

A BUSINESS MAN IN THE ARMY

> "The reasonable man adapts himself to the world; the unreasonable one persists in trying to adapt the world to himself. Therefore all progress depends on the unreasonable man."—G. B. SHAW (in *A Revolutionists's Handbook*).

COLONEL MUSGRAVE of the R.A.S.C. had been instructed to superintend the supply and transport arrangements of the Portuguese Division, and Lieutenant Barefoot, in charge of a Labour Company, had been detailed to assist him.

"These men," he explained to Colonel Musgrave, "are all Southampton dockers. In peace time I am their employer, and Sergeant Scott over there is their foreman. They tell me your Labour Companies have often shown rather poor discipline. There's

no fear of anything like that with my men; they have been chosen with care, and look up to me as if I were a king. Scott, my sergeant, can do anything; neither he nor my men ever drink a drop. As for me, I am a real business man, and I intend to introduce new methods into the army."

Barefoot was fifty years old; he had a bald head shaped like an egg. He had just enlisted to serve his King and country, and was overflowing with goodwill.

The next morning twenty of his men were dead-drunk, two were absent at roll-call, and Sergeant Scott had a scar on his nose which seemed to be the result of a somewhat sudden encounter with mother earth.

"No matter," said the worthy N.C.O., "Barefoot is an ass, and never notices anything."

Next day the first batch of Portuguese troops arrived. British tugs towed the huge transports round the tiny harbour with graceful ease, and the decks seethed with

masses of troops. The harbour captain and the *Ponts et Chaussées* engineer were loud in protest against these wonders, as being "contrary to the ideas of the Service." The wharves were filled with motor lorries, mountains of pressed hay, sacks of oats and boxes of biscuits.

Colonel Musgrave, who was to take charge of this treasure-store, began to make his plan of campaign.

"To-morrow, Friday," he said, "there will be a parade on the wharf at 7 a.m. I shall hold an inspection myself before work is begun."

On Friday morning at seven, Barefoot, his labourers and the lorries were all paraded on the wharf in excellent order. At eight the colonel got up, had his bath and shaved. Then he partook of eggs and bacon, bread and jam, and drank two cups of tea. Towards nine o'clock his car took him to the wharf. When he saw the men standing motionless, the officer saluting and

the lorries all in a row, his face went as red as a brick, and he stood up in his car and addressed them angrily:

"So you are incapable of the slightest initiative! If I am absent for an hour, detained by more important work, everything comes to a standstill! I see I cannot rely on anyone here except myself!"

The same evening he called the officers together.

"To-morrow, Saturday," he said, "there will be a parade at 7 a.m.— and this time I shall be there."

The next morning Barefoot with his men and lorries paraded once more on the wharf, with a sea-wind sweeping an icy rain into their faces. At half-past seven the lieutenant took action.

"We will start work," he said. "The colonel was quite right yesterday and spoke like a real business man. In our respect for narrow formalism, we stupidly wasted a whole morning's work."

So his men began to pile up the cases, the lorries started to move the sacks of oats, and the day's work was pretty well advanced when Colonel Musgrave appeared. Having had his bath and shaved, and absorbed poached eggs on toast, bread, marmalade and three cups of tea, he had not been able to be ready before ten. Suddenly, coming upon all this healthy bustle, he leaped out of his car, and angrily addressed the eager Barefoot, who was approaching him with a modest smile.

"Who has had the impudence to call the men off parade before my arrival?" he said. "So if I happen to be detained elsewhere by more important work, my orders are simply disregarded! I see again that I cannot rely on anyone here except myself!"

Meanwhile the crestfallen Barefoot was meditating upon the mysterious ways of the army. Musgrave inspected the work and decided that everything was to be done all over again. The biscuits were to be put in

the shed where the oats had been piled, and the oats were to be put out in the open where the biscuits had been. The meat was to change places with the jam, and the mustard with the bacon. The lorries were to take away again everything they had just brought up. So that when lunch-time arrived, everything was in exactly the same state as it had been at dawn. The Admiralty announced the arrival of a transport at two o'clock; the men were supposed to find their rations ready for them upon landing.

Musgrave very pluckily decided that the Labour Company were to have no rest, and were just to be content with nibbling a light lunch while they went on with their work.

Barefoot, who had got up at six and was very hungry, approached the colonel in fear and trembling.

"May I leave my sergeant in charge for half an hour, sir?" he asked. "He can do everything as well as I can. I should like

just to run along to the nearest café and have something warm to eat."

Musgrave gazed at him in mournful astonishment.

"Really," he said, "you young fellows don't seem to realize that there's a war on." Whereupon he stepped into his car and drove off to the hotel.

. . . . .

Barefoot, somewhat downcast, buttonholed the interpreter, who was father-confessor to all Englishmen in distress. Aurelle begged him not to get excited.

"You are always talking about introducing your business methods into the army. As if that were possible! Why, the objects of the two things are entirely different. A business man is always looking for work; an officer is always trying to avoid it. If you neglect these principles, I can foresee an ignominious end in store for you, Barefoot, and Colonel Musgrave will trample on your corpse."

Now the thirty thousand Portuguese had been fed during their long voyage on tinned food; and as the transports' holds were being cleared, innumerable empty tins began to accumulate on the wharves. Barefoot and his men were ordered to gather these tins together into regular heaps. These grew so rapidly that the Mayor of the town was exceedingly concerned to see such a waste of space in a harbour already filled to bursting-point, and sent a pointed letter to Colonel Musgrave, asking him to find some other place for his empty tins.

Colonel Musgrave ordered his interpreter to write an equally pointed letter, reminding the Mayor of B—— that the removal of refuse was a municipal concern, and that the British Army was therefore waiting for the Town to hand over a plot of ground for the purpose.

Barefoot happened to speak of this difficulty one day to the business man at whose house he was billeted; and the latter told

him that a process had recently been discovered by which old tins could be melted down and used again, and that a company had been floated to work out the scheme; they would be sure to purchase Colonel Musgrave's tins.

The enthusiastic Barefoot began to see visions of profitable and glorious enterprises. Not only would he rid his chief and the Mayor of B—— of a lot of cumbersome salvage, but this modest contract for some tens of tons might well serve as a model to those responsible for the sale of the millions of empty tins scattered daily by the British Army over the plains of Flanders and Artois. And the Commander-in-Chief would call the attention of the War Office to the fact that "Lieutenant E. W. Barefoot, by his bold and intelligent initiative, had enabled salvage to be carried out to the extent of several million pounds."

"Aurelle," he said to the interpreter, "let's write to this company immediately;

we'll speak about it to the colonel when we get their reply."

The answer came by return; they were offered twenty francs per ton, carriage at the company's cost.

Barefoot explained his scheme to Colonel Musgrave with assumed modesty, adding that it would be a good thing to flatten out the tins before dispatching them, and that Sergeant Scott, who was a handy man, could easily undertake the job.

"First of all," said the colonel, "why can't you mind your own business? Don't you know you are forbidden to correspond with strangers upon matters pertaining to the service without consulting your superior officers? And who told you *I've* not been thinking for quite a long time of selling your damned tins? Do you think things are as simple as all that in the army? Fetch Aurelle; I'm going to see the superintendent of the French Customs."

Three years' experience had taught

Colonel Musgrave that the French Customs Service were always to be relied on.

"Kindly ask this gentleman whether the British Army, having imported tins with their contents without paying any duty, has the right to sell these tins empty in France?"

"No," answered the official, when the colonel's question had been translated to him, "there is an order from our headquarters about the matter. The British Army must not carry on any sale of metal on French soil."

"Thank him very much," said the colonel, satisfied.

"Now just look here," he said to Barefoot on returning, "what a nice mess you would have made if I hadn't known my business. Let this be a lesson to you. In future it will be better if you look after your men and leave the rest to me. As for the tins, I have thought of a solution which will satisfy every one concerned."

Next day Barefoot received orders to have the tins packed on lorries, and carried in several loads to the end of the pier, whence they were neatly cast into the sea. In this way the Mayor was spared the trouble of finding a dumping-ground, the British Government paid for the petrol consumed by the lorries, the *Ponts et Chaussées* bore the expense of the dredging, and, as Colonel Musgrave said, every one was satisfied.

. . . . .

Colonel Parker, before rejoining the Division, wrote out a report, as usual, about the operations at B——.

"I beg to draw attention," the document ran, "to the excellent organization of the Supply arrangements. Thirty thousand men have been provided with rations in a harbour where no British base existed. This result is due especially to the organizing abilities displayed by Colonel A. C. Musgrave, C.M.G., D.S.O. (R.A.S.C.). Al-

though this officer has only recently been promoted, I consider it my duty to recommend him . . ."

"What about Barefoot?" said Aurelle. "Couldn't he be made a captain?"

"Barefoot? That damned shop-keeper fellow whom Musgrave told me about? The man who wanted to introduce his methods into the army? He's a public danger, my boy! But I can propose your friend Major Baraquin for a C.M.G., if you like."

"Baraquin?" Aurelle exclaimed in turn. "Why, he always refused everything you asked him for."

"Yes," said the colonel; "he's not very easy to get on with; he doesn't understand things; but he's a soldier, every inch of him! I like old Baraquin!"

CHAPTER V

THE STORY OF PRIVATE BIGGS

"La Nature fait peu de gens vaillants; c'est la bonne institution et la discipline."—CHARRON.

THE new padre was a stout, artless man with a kind face. He was only just out from England, and delighted the general with his air of innocent surprise.

"What's making all that noise?" he asked.

"Our guns," said Colonel Parker.

"Really?" replied the padre, in mild astonishment. As he walked into the camp, he was stopped by a sentry.

"Who goes there?"

"Friend," he answered. Then he went up to the man and added anxiously, "I

suppose that was the right thing to answer, wasn't it?"

The general was delighted at these stories, and asked the Rev. Mr. Jeffries to take his meals at his own table.

"Padre," he said, "don't you think our mess is a happy family?"

"Padre," chimed in the doctor approvingly, "don't you think that this mess has all the characteristics of a family? It is just a group of people thrown together by chance, who never understand each other in the least, who criticize one another severely, and are compelled by circumstances to put up with each other."

"There's nothing to joke about," said Colonel Parker. "It's these compulsory associations that often give rise to the finest devotion."

And being in a lively mood that evening, he related the story of Private Biggs:

"You remember Biggs, who used to be my orderly? He was a shy, refined little

fellow, who used to sell neckties in peace-time. He loathed war, shells, blood and danger.

"Well, at the end of 1916, the powers that be sent the battalion to Gamaches training camp. A training camp, padre, is a plot of ground traversed by imitation trenches, where officers who have never been near the line teach war-worn veterans their business.

"The officers in charge of these camps, having a *clientèle* to satisfy, start some new fashion every season. This spring I understand that 'open file' is to be the order of the day; last autumn 'massed formation' was the watchword of the best firms. There's a lot of talk been going on for some time, too, about 'firing from the hip'; that's one of my friend Lamb's absolutely original creations — a clever fellow that; he ought to do very well.

"At Gamaches the officer in command was Major Macleod, a bloodthirsty Scot

whose hobby was bayonet work. He was very successful at showing that, when all's said and done, it's the bayonet that wins battles. Others before him have sworn that it is only hand-grenades, heavy guns, or even cavalry that can give a decisive victory. But Macleod's doctrine was original in one respect: he favoured moral suggestion rather than actual practice for the manufacture of his soldiers. For the somewhat repulsive slaughter of bayonet fighting he found it necessary to inspire the men with a fierce hatred of the enemy.

"For this purpose he had bags of straw stuffed to the shape of German soldiers, adorned with a sort of German helmet and painted field-grey, and these were given as targets to our Highlanders.

"'Blood is flowing,' he used to repeat as the training proceeded, 'blood is flowing, and you must rejoice at the sight of it. Don't get tender-hearted; just think only of stabbing in the right place. To with-

draw the bayonet from the corpse, place your foot on the stomach.'

"You can imagine how Biggs's soul revolted at these speeches. In vain did Sergeant-Major Fairbanks of the Guards deliver himself of his most bloodthirsty *repertoire;* Biggs's tender heart was horror-struck at the idea of bowels and brains exposed, and it was always owing to him that the most carefully-prepared charges were deprived of the warlike frenzy demanded by Major Macleod.

"'*As* you were!' Sergeant-Major Fairbanks used to yell. '*As* you were! Now then, Private Biggs.' And after twenty attempts had failed, he would conclude sadly, 'Well, boys, mark my words, come Judgment Day, when we're all p'radin' for the final review an' the Lord comes along, no sooner will the Archangel give the order, "'Tention!" than 'e'll 'ave to shout, "As you were! Now then, Private Biggs!"'

"When the period of training was over,

Macleod assembled all our men in a large shed and gave 'em his celebrated lecture on 'hatred of the enemy.'

"I was really curious to hear him, because people at G.H.Q. were always talking about the extraordinary influence he had over the troops' *moral*. 'One of Macleod's speeches,' said the Chief of Staff, 'does the Huns as much harm as ten batteries of heavy howitzers.'

"The lecturer began with a ghastly description of the shooting of prisoners, and went on to a nauseating account of the effects of gas and a terrible story about the crucifixion of a Canadian sergeant; and then, when our flesh was creeping and our throats were dry, came a really eloquent hymn of hate, ending with an appeal to the avenging bayonet.

"Macleod was silent for a few minutes, enjoying the sight of our haggard faces; then, considering we were sufficiently worked up, he went on:

"'Now, if there is any one of you who wants anything explained, let him speak up; I'm ready to answer any questions.'

"Out of the silence came the still, small voice of Private Biggs.

"'Please, sir?'

"'Yes, my man,' said Major Macleod kindly.

"'Please, sir, can you tell me how I can transfer to the Army Service Corps?'

"That evening, in the kitchen, our orderlies discussed the incident, and discovered in course of conversation that Biggs had never killed a man. All the others were tough old warriors, and they were much astonished.

"Kemble, the general's orderly, a giant with a dozen or so to his account, was full of pity for the poor little Cockney. 'Mon, mon,' he said, 'I can hardly believe ye. Why, never a single one? Not even wounded?'

"'No,' said Biggs, 'honest Injun. I run

so slowly, I'm always the last to get there — I never get a chance.'

"Well, a few days later, the battalion was up in the line again, and was sent into a little stunt opposite Fleurbaix, to straighten out a salient. You remember, sir? It's one of the best things the Division has ever done.

"Artillery preparation, low barrage, cutting communications — everything came off like clockwork, and we caught the Boches in their holes like rabbits.

"While the men were busy with their rifles, grenades and bayonets, cleaning up the conquered trenches, suddenly a voice was heard shouting:

"'Harry, Harry, where are you? . . . Just send Biggs along here, will you? . . . Pass the word along to Private Biggs.'

"It was the voice of the Highlander, Kemble. Some giant grasped Biggs by the seat of his trousers and swung him and his rifle up to the parapet. Then two strong

hands seized the little man, and he was swung in mid-air from man to man right up the file till he was finally handed over to Kemble, who seized him affectionately with his left hand, and, full of joy at the dainty treat he had in store for his friend, cried, 'Mon, mon, look in this wee hole: I've got twa of 'em at the end of my rifle, but I've kept 'em for you.'

"This is a true story," added Colonel Parker, "and it shows once more that the British soldier has a kind heart."

The Rev. Mr. Jeffries had turned very pale.

CHAPTER VI

AN AIR RAID

"I do not like seriousness. I think it is irreligious."—CHESTERTON.

"THEY'LL be here soon," said Dr. O'Grady. "The moon is low, and the shadows are long, and these oblique lights will suit them very well."

The division was in rest on the hills overlooking Abbeville, and the doctor was walking to and fro with Colonel Parker and Aurelle along the lime-bordered terrace, from which they could see the town that was going to be attacked. From the wet grassy lawns near by groups of anxious women were scanning the horizon.

"Yesterday evening, in a suburb," said Aurelle, "they killed a baker's three children."

"I am sorry," put in the doctor, "they should be favoured with this fine weather. The law of the storm seems to be exactly the same for these barbarians as it is for innocent birds. It's absolutely contradictory to the notion of a just Divinity."

"Doctor," said Aurelle, "you are an unbeliever."

"No," replied the doctor, "I am an Irishman, and I respect the bitter wisdom of the Catholic faith. But this universe of ours, I confess, strikes me as completely non-moral. Shells and decorations fall haphazard from above on the just and the unjust alike; M. Poincaré's carburettor gets out of order just as often as the Kaiser's. The Gods have thrown up their job, and handed it over to the Fates. It is true that Apollo, who is a well-behaved person, takes out his chariot every morning; that may satisfy the poets and the astronomers, but it distresses the moralist. How satisfactory

it would be if the resistance of the air were relative to the virtues of the airman, and if Archimedes' principle did not apply to pirates!"

"O'Grady," observed Colonel Parker, "you know the words of the psalm: 'As for the ungodly, it is not so with them; but they are like the chaff which the wind scattereth away from the face of the earth.'"

"Yes, colonel; but supposing you, a good man, and I, a sinner, were suddenly hit by a bomb——"

"But, doctor," Aurelle interrupted, "this science of yours is after all only an act of faith."

"How so, my boy? It is obvious that there are laws in this world. If I press the trigger of this revolver, the bullet will fly out, and if General Webb is given an Army Corps, General Bramble will have a bilious attack."

"Quite so, doctor; you observe a few

series linked together, and you conclude that the world is governed by laws. But the most important facts — life, thought, love — elude your observations. You may perhaps be sure that the sun is going to rise to-morrow morning, but you don't know what Colonel Parker is going to say next minute. Yet you assert that the colonel is a machine; that is because your religion tells you to."

"So does every one else's religion," said the doctor. "Only yesterday I read in the Bishop of Broadfield's message: 'The prayers for rain cannot take place this week, as the barometer is too high.'"

Far away over the plain, in the direction of Amiens, the star-sprinkled sky began to flicker with tiny, flashing points of light.

"Here they come," said Aurelle.

"They'll be ten minutes yet," said the doctor. They resumed their walk.

"O'Grady," Colonel Parker put in, "you're getting more crazy every day.

You claim, if I comprehend your foolish ideas aright, that a scientist can foretell rain better than an Anglican bishop. What a magnificent paradox! Meteorology and medicine are far less solid sciences than theology. *You* say that the universe is governed by laws, don't you? Nothing is less certain. It is true that chance seems to have established a relative balance in the tiny corner of the universe which we inhabit, but there is nothing to show that this balance is going to last. If you were to press the trigger of this revolver to-morrow, it is just possible that it would not go off. It is also possible that the German aeroplanes will cease to fly, and that General Bramble will take a dislike to the gramophone. *I* should not be surprised at any of these things; I should simply recognize that supernatural forces had come into our lives."

"Doctor," said Aurelle, "you know the clock which my orderly Brommit winds up

every evening? Let us suppose that on one of the molecules that go to make up the minute-hand of that clock there live a race of beings who are infinitely small, and yet as intelligent as we are. These little creatures have measured their world, and have noticed that the speed of its motion is constant; they have discovered that their planet covers a fixed distance in a fixed period of time, which for us is a minute and for them a century. Amongst their people there are two schools of thought. The scientists claim that the laws of the universe are immutable, and that no supernatural power can intervene to change them. The believers admit the existence of these laws, but they also assert that there is a divine being who can interfere with their course; and to that being they address prayers. In that tiny world, which of them is right? The believers, of course; for there is such a being as Private Brommit, and if he forgets one evening to wind up the clock, the

scientists and all their proud theories will vanish away like smoke in a cataclysm which will bring whole worlds to their doom."

"That's so," said the doctor; "but if they had prayed ——"

"Listen," interrupted Aurelle.

The park had become strangely silent; and though there was no wind, they could hear the gentle rustling of the leaves, the barking of a dog in the valley, the crackling of a twig under a bird's weight. Up above, in the clear sky, there was a feeling of some hostile presence, and a disagreeable little buzzing sound, as though there were some invisible mosquito up among the stars.

"They're here now," said the doctor.

The noise increased: a buzzing swarm of giant bees seemed to be approaching the hill.

Suddenly there was a long hiss, and a ray of light leaped forth from the valley and began to search the sky with a sort of super-

human thoroughness. The women on the lawn ran away to the shelter of the trees. The short, sharp barking of the guns, the deeper rumble of the bombs that were beginning to fall on the town, and the earth-shaking explosions terrified them beyond endurance.

"I'm going to shut my eyes," said one, "it's easier like that."

"My God," exclaimed another, "I can't move my legs an inch!"

"Fear," said the doctor, "shows itself in hereditary reflexes. Man, when in danger, seeks the pack, and fright makes his flesh creep, because his furred ancestors bristled all over when in combat, in order to appear enormous and terrible."

A terrific explosion shook the hill, and flames arose over the town.

"They're aiming at the station," said the colonel. "Those searchlights do more harm than good. They simply frame the target and show it up."

"When I was at Havre," Aurelle remarked, "a gunner went to ask the engineers for some searchlights that were rotting away in some store or other. 'Quite impossible,' said the engineer; 'they're the war reserve; we're forbidden to touch them.' He could never be brought to understand that the war we were carrying on over here was the one that was specified in his schedule."

The great panting and throbbing of an aeroplane was coming nearer, and the whole sky was quivering with the noise of machinery like a huge factory.

"My God," exclaimed the doctor, "we're in for it this time!"

But the stars twinkled gently on, and above the din they heard the clear, delicate notes of a bird's song — just as though the throbbing motors, the whizzing shells and the frightened wailing of the women were nothing but the harmonies devised by the divine composer of some military-pastoral

symphony to sustain the slender melody of a bird.

"Listen," whispered Colonel Parker, "listen — a nightingale!"

CHAPTER VII

LOVE AND THE INFANT DUNDAS

> ". . . Of which, if thou be a severe sour-complexion'd man, then I hereby disallow thee to be a competent judge."—*The Compleat Angler.*

THE Infant Dundas struck up a ragtime on the sergeant-major's typewriter, did a juggling turn with the army list, and let forth a few hunting yells; then, seeing that the interpreter had reached the required state of exasperation, he said:

"Aurelle, why should we stay in this camp? Let's go into the town; I'll get hold of the Intelligence car, and we'll go and see Germaine."

Germaine was a pretty, friendly girl who sold novels, chocolates and electric lamps at Abbeville. Dundas, who was not interested in women, pretended to have a discreet pas-

sion for her; in his mind France was associated with the idea of love-affairs, and he thought it the right thing to have a girl-friend there, just as he would have thought it correct to hunt in Ireland, or to ski at St. Moritz.

But when Germaine, with feigned timidity, directed on him the slowly dwindling fire of her gaze, Dundas was afraid to put his arm round her waist; this rosy-cheeked giant, who was a champion boxer and had been wounded five times, was as bashful and shy as a child.

"Good morning," he would say with a blush.

"Good morning," Germaine would answer, adding in a lower voice for Aurelle's benefit, "Tell him to buy something."

In vain did Aurelle endeavour to find books for the Infant. French novels bored him; only the elder Dumas and Alphonse Daudet found favour in his eyes. Dundas would buy his seventeenth electric lamp,

stop a few minutes on the doorstep to play with Germaine's black dog Dick, and then say good-bye, giving her hand a long squeeze and going away perfectly happy in the thought that he had done his duty and gone on the spree in France in the correct manner.

"A nice boy, your friend — but he is rather shy," she used to say.

On Sundays she went for walks along the river with an enormous mother and ungainly sisters, escorted gravely by Dundas. The mess did not approve of these rustic idylls.

"I saw him sitting beside her in a field," said Colonel Parker, "and his horse was tied to a tree. I think it's disgusting."

"It's shameful," said the padre.

"I'll speak to him about it," said the general, "it's a disgrace to the mess."

Aurelle tried to speak up for his friend.

"Maybe," said the doctor, "pleasure is a right in France, but in England it's a

crime. With you, Aurelle, when girls see you taking a lady-friend out, their opinion of you goes up. In London, on the other hand ——"

"Do you mean to say, doctor, that the English never flirt?"

"They flirt more than you do, my boy; that's why they say less about it. Austerity of doctrine bears a direct proportion to strength of instinct. You like to discuss these matters, because you think lightly of them, and in that we Irish resemble you. Our great writers, such as Bernard Shaw, write thousands of paradoxes about marriage, because their thoughts are chaste. The English are far more prudish because their passions are stronger."

"What's all this you're saying, doctor?" interrupted the general. "I seem to be hearing very strange doctrines."

"We're talking about French morals, sir."

"Is it true, Messiou," inquired Colonel

Parker, " that it is the custom in France for a man to take his wife and his mistress to the theatre together to the same box? "

" You needn't try to convince Aurelle of your virtue, colonel," said the doctor; " he's been living with you for four years, and he knows you."

. . . . .

Meanwhile Dundas continued to go down into Abbeville every day and meet his friend. The shelling had got very bad, and the inhabitants began to leave the town. Germaine, however, remained calm. One day a shell hit the shop next door to hers, and shattered the whole of the whitewashed front of the house, and the plaster crumbling away revealed a fine wooden building which for the last two centuries had been concealing its splendid carved beams beneath a wretched coat of whitewash. So also did Germaine, divested by danger of her superficial vulgarity, suddenly show her

mettle and prove herself the daughter of a race of soldiers.

Accordingly Dundas had conceived a warm and respectful friendship for her. But he went no further until one day when the alarm caught them together just as he was bidding her good-bye; then only did the darkness and the pleasant excitement of danger cause him to forget ceremony and convention for a few minutes.

Next day Germaine presented the Infant with a fat yellow book; it was Madame de Staël's *Corinne*. The rosy-cheeked one looked askance at the small closely printed pages.

"Aurelle," he implored, "be a good chap and tell me what it's all about — I'm not going to read the damned thing!"

"It's the story of a young Scotch laird," replied Aurelle, "who wants to marry a foreign girl against his family's wish."

"My God!" exclaimed Dundas. "Do

you think she expects me to marry her? My cousin Lord Bamford married a dancer and he's very happy; he's the gentleman and she has the brains. But in this case it's the mother — she's a terrible creature!"

"The Zulus," put in the doctor, who was listening, "have a religious custom which forbids the bridegroom-elect to see his mother-in-law. Should he happen but to see her footprints in the sand, he must turn and flee. Nothing could be wiser; for love implies an absurd and boundless admiration for the loved one, and her mother, appearing to the lover in the very image of his beloved without the charm and liveliness of youth, will deter him from that brief spell of folly which is so necessary for the propagation of the species."

"Some mothers are charming," argued Aurelle.

"That's another danger," said the doctor, "for as the mother always tends to live

her daughter's emotional life, there is a constant risk of her falling in love with her son-in-law."

"My God!" cried Dundas, horror-struck.

However, the German airmen set his fears at rest that very evening by destroying half the town. The statue of Admiral Courbet in the middle of the square near the bookseller's shop was hit by a bomb. The admiral continued to point an outstretched finger towards the station, but the bookseller cleared out. Germaine followed him regretfully.

As she was unable to take her dog Dick — a horrid mongrel, half-poodle and half-spaniel — Dundas gravely consented to look after him. He loved dogs with a sentimental warmth which he denied to men. Their ideas interested him, their philosophy was the same as his, and he used to talk to them for hours at a time like a nurse to her children.

The general and Colonel Parker were not a bit astonished when he introduced Dick into the mess. They had found fault with him for falling in love, but they approved of his adopting a dog.

Dick, an Abbeville guttersnipe, was therefore admitted to the refinements of the general's table. He remained, however, a rough son of the people, and barked when Private Brommit appeared with the meat.

"Behave yourself, sir," Dundas said to him, genuinely shocked, "behave yourself. A well-brought-up dog never, never does that. A good dog never barks indoors, never, never, never."

Germaine's pet was offended and disappeared for three days. The orderlies reported he had been seen in the country in doubtful company. At last he returned, cheerful and unkempt, with one ear torn and one eye bleeding, and asked to be let in by barking merrily.

"You're a very naughty dog, sir," said

Dundas as he nursed him adroitly, "a very, very bad little dog indeed."

Whereupon he turned towards the general.

"I'm very much afraid, sir," he said, "that this fellow Dick is not quite a gentleman."

"He's a French dog," replied General Bramble with sorrowful forbearance.

CHAPTER VIII

A GREAT CHEF

> "Le roi ordonnait le matin petit souper ou très petit souper; mais ce dernier était abondant et de trois services sans le fruit."—SAINT-SIMON.

IN the month of February 1918, Aurelle was ordered by the French mission at British G.H.Q. to report at the *sous-préfecture* at Abbeville and to hold himself for one day at the disposal of M. Lucas, who would call for him in due course.

Aurelle waited for some time for M. Lucas, who eventually appeared escorted by an English chauffeur. He was a rather stout, clean-shaven little man, and wore a well-made blue suit and a yachting cap. With his hands in his pockets, his curt speech and the authority of his demeanour,

he looked every inch a man accustomed to command.

"You are the interpreter from G.H.Q.?" he asked. "Have you a written order?"

Aurelle was obliged to admit he had only received an order by telephone.

"I can't understand it!" said M. Lucas. "The most necessary precautions are neglected. Have you at least been told who I am? No? Well, listen to me, my friend, and kindly hold your tongue for a minute."

He went and shut the door of the *sous-préfet's* office, and came back to the interpreter. "I am ——" he began.

He looked nervously about him, closed a window, and whispered very softly, "I am His Majesty the King of England's chef."

"Chef?" Aurelle repeated, not grasping his meaning.

"His Majesty the King of England's chef," the great man deigned to repeat,

smiling kindly at the astonishment the young man showed at this revelation.

"You must know, my friend, that tomorrow the President of the Republic is to be His Majesty's guest in this town. The activity of the German airmen obliges us to keep the programme secret till the last moment. However, I have been sent out in advance with Sir Charles to inspect the British Officers' Club, where the lunch is to take place. You are to accompany me there."

So they set off for the former Château de Vauclère, now transformed by British genius for comfort into an officers' club, Aurelle escorting the royal cook and the equerry, who was an old English gentleman with a pink face, white whiskers and grey spats. Above their heads circled the squadron of aeroplanes which had been ordered to protect the favoured city.

During the drive, M. Lucas condescended to say a few words of explanation.

"Our lunch is to be quite informal; the menu very simple — ever since the beginning of the war His Majesty has expressed a wish to be rationed like his people — river trout, *tournedos aux pommes,* some fruit, and cider to drink."

"But, Monsieur Lucas," interrupted Sir Charles timidly, "you know Her Majesty prefers to drink milk."

"The Queen will drink cider like every one else," replied the chef curtly.

Sir Charles was charmed with the paved courtyard of the château, the brick and stone façade with its carved escutcheons, the simple curves of the dining-room panelling, and the picture over the door, which he attributed, not without reason, to Nattier.

"It's very, very small," murmured M. Lucas pensively. "However, as it's wartime ——"

Then he inquired about the kitchen. It was a vast and well-lighted place; the red

and white tiles on the polished floor shone brightly in the sunshine; magnificent but useless copper saucepans hung upon the walls.

In front of the oven a cook in a white cap was at work with a few assistants. Surprised by the noise, he turned round, and, suddenly recognizing the man in the blue suit, went as white as his cap, and dropped the pan he was holding in his hand.

"You?" he exclaimed.

"Yes, my friend," replied the august visitor quite simply. "What a surprise to find you here! What a pleasure also," he added kindly. "Ah, now I feel relieved! An alfresco meal, a strange kitchen like this, made me very anxious, I must confess. But with such a lieutenant as you, my dear friend, the battle is already half won."

"Yes," he continued, turning towards Aurelle, who was gazing with emotion upon

the encounter and thinking of Napoleon entrusting his cavalry to Ney on the eve of Waterloo, "it is a curious coincidence to find Jean Paillard here. At the age of fifteen we made our *début* together under the great Escoffier. When I was appointed chef to the Ritz, Paillard took charge of the Carlton; when I took Westminster, he accepted Norfolk."

Having thus unconsciously delivered himself of this romantic couplet — which goes to prove once again that poetry is the ancient and natural expression of all true feeling — M. Lucas paused for a moment, and, lowering his gaze, added in an infinitely expressive undertone:

"And here I am now with the King. What about you?"

"I?" replied the other with a touch of shame. "It's only two months since I was released; till then I was in the trenches."

"What!" exclaimed M. Lucas, scanda-

lized. "In the trenches? A chef like you!"

"Yes," answered Jean Paillard with dignity. "I was cook at G.H.Q."

With a shrug of resignation the two artists deplored the waste of talent for which armed democracies are responsible; and M. Lucas began in resolute tones to announce his plan of campaign. He had the curt precision which all great captains possess.

"Since the war broke out, His Majesty has expressed a wish to be rationed like his people. Therefore the menu is to be very simple: *truite à la Bellevue, tournedos aux pommes,* some fruit. — Of course there will have to be an entrée and some dessert for the Staff. The drink will be cider."

"May I remind you, Monsieur Lucas," Sir Charles put in anxiously, "that Her Majesty prefers to drink milk?"

"I have already told you," said the chef,

annoyed, "that the Queen will drink cider like everybody else. . . . Nevertheless, Paillard, you will kindly show me the contents of your cellar; there will, of course, have to be wine for the Staff. The *tournedos,* I need hardly say, are to be grilled over a charcoal fire, and larded, of course. As to salad — seasoning, tomatoes and walnuts ——"

As he gave his orders, he illustrated their execution with gestures of the utmost solemnity, and his hands moved busily amongst imaginary saucepans.

"The menu is short," he said, "but it must be perfect. The great cook is better recognized by the perfection of a piece of beef — or let me say rather by the seasoning of a salad — than by the richness of his sweets. One of the finest successes in my career — the one I enjoy recalling above all others — is that of having initiated the English aristocracy into the mysteries of

Camembert. The choice of fruit — now I come to think of it, Paillard, have you any peaches?"

"I should think we had!" said the latter, breaking open the lid of a crate which revealed a number of delicately shaded ripe peaches glowing in their beds of straw and cotton-wool.

The chef took one and stroked it gently.

"Paillard, Paillard," he said sadly, "do you call *these* peaches? I can see you have been a soldier, poor fellow. Never mind, I can send the car to Montreuil."

He remained a few minutes longer in meditation; then, satisfied at last, he decided to leave the château. In the street, he took Aurelle's arm very kindly.

"My friend," he said, "I think that will do, thank you. And if you ever have the opportunity of seeing Their Majesties, don't let it slip by. In France, you have very wrong ideas, I assure you; since the Revo-

lution, you have a prejudice against Royal Families. It is childish; you can take my word for it. I have been living with this one for more than five years, and I assure you they are quite respectable people."

CHAPTER IX

PRÉLUDE À LA SOIRÉE D'UN GÉNÉRAL

". . . of cabbages and kings."—
LEWIS CARROLL.

A BLUE forage-cap appeared under the flap of the camouflaged tent. "Messiou," cried the general, "we were beginning to despair of ever seeing you again."

"Yo-ho! Hello — o!" shouted the Infant Dundas. "I *am* glad! Come and have some lunch, old man."

Aurelle, happy to find his friends again, fell to heartily on the mutton, boiled potatoes and mint sauce. When they reached the cheese, General Bramble questioned him about his journey.

"Well, Messiou, what about your leave?

What is Paris looking like nowadays, and why did your mother the French Mission tell us she was keeping you two days at Abbeville?"

Aurelle told then the story of M. Lucas and of the King's visit.

"What's that, Messiou?" said General Bramble. "You've seen our King? Does he look well?"

"Very well indeed, sir."

"Good old George!" muttered the general tenderly. "Yes, he looked quite well when he came here. Tell us that story of the cook over again, Messiou; it's a jolly good story."

Aurelle complied, and when he had done, he bent over towards Colonel Parker and asked him why the general spoke of the King like an affectionate nurse.

"The King," said the colonel, "is much more to us than you might imagine. To the general, who is an Etonian, he is a kind of neighbour. To Dundas, he's the colonel

of his regiment. To the padre, he's the head of the Church. To an old Tory like me, he's the living embodiment of England's traditions and prejudices, and the pledge of her loyalty to them in the future. As for the paternal tone, that's because for half a century the King was a Queen. Loyalism became an attitude of protective chivalry; nothing could have consolidated the dynasty more firmly. Royalty is beloved not only by the aristocracy but by all classes. It's a great asset to a people without imagination like ours to be able to see in one man the embodiment of the nation."

"Messiou," interposed the general, "didn't they give you an M.V.O. for your services?"

"What is that, sir — a new ribbon?"

"My God!" exclaimed Dundas, much scandalized. "You've never heard of the Victorian Order?"

"When King Edward played bridge," said the general, "and his partner left it

to him at the right moment, the King used to declare with great satisfaction, 'No trumps, and you're an M.V.O.!'"

"The idea that a word from the sovereign's lips or the contact of his person is sufficient to cure his subjects, is a very ancient and beautiful one," said the colonel. "Before he started distributing ribbons, the King used to cure scrofula. That excellent custom, however, came to an end with William of Orange, who used to say to the patient while he was operating, 'God give you better health and more sense!'"

"The King's taboo has also disappeared," said the doctor.

"I can assure you," said Aurelle, "that his taboo is still effective. On the platform before he arrived there were three A.P.M.'s bustling about and chasing away the few spectators. As the train came into the station one of them ran up to me and said, 'Are you the interpreter on duty? Well, there's a seedy-looking chap over there, who

seems up to no good. Go and tell him from me that if he doesn't clear out immediately I'll have him arrested.' I did so. 'Arrest me!' said the man. 'Why, I'm the special *commissaire de police* entrusted with the King's safety.'"

. . . . .

"Well, Messiou," inquired the general, "have you brought me back any new records from Paris for my gramophone?"

Aurelle unstrapped his kit and proceeded, not without some anxiety, to unpack "Le Prélude à l'Après-midi d'un Faune."

"I don't know whether you'll like it, sir; it's modern French music."

"I'm sure it's very fine, Messiou," said the general confidently. And in the interest of international courtesy he immediately assumed the beatific expression he usually kept for Caruso.

After the first few notes, an air of bewilderment appeared upon his kindly face.

He looked at Aurelle, whom he was surprised to find quite unmoved; at Colonel Parker, who was hard at work; at the doctor, who was inclining his head and listening devoutly; and, resigning himself to his fate, he waited for the end of the acidulated and discordant noises.

"Well, Messiou," he said when it was over, "it's very nice of you not to have forgotten us — but ——"

"Yes," put in Colonel Parker, looking up, "but I'm damned if it's music!"

"What?" shouted the doctor, scandalized. "A masterpiece like that? Not music?"

"Come, come," said the general soothingly, "maybe it wasn't written for the gramophone. But, doctor, I should like you to explain."

"Have you seen the Russian Ballet, sir? The faun, lying on a rock, is watching for the nymphs and playing in a monotonous key on his flute. At last they appear, half dressed; he pursues them, but they fly away,

and one of them drops a sash, which is all he gets."

"This is very interesting," said the general, much excited. "Wind up the gramophone, Messiou, and give us the disc over again; I want to see the half-dressed nymphs. Make a sign to me at the right moment."

Once again the instrument filled the rustic dug-out with the wistful grace of the Prelude. Aurelle murmured in a low voice:

> "Ces nymphes, je les veux perpétuer, si clair
> Leur incarnat léger qu'il voltige dans l'air
> Assoupi de sommeils touffus. . . ."

"Bravo, Messiou!" said the general, when the last notes rang out. "I like it better already than I did the first time. I'm sure I'll get used to it in the end."

"I shan't," said Colonel Parker. "I shall always prefer 'God Save the King.'"

"Yes," replied the doctor; "but your children will hum 'Pelléas,' and your grandchildren will say, 'Do you know that old

tune that used to be the rage in grandfather's time?' What you never can get used to, colonel, is finding yourself in the presence of a somewhat more complex work of art than the childish productions to which you are accustomed. Nature is not simple; she takes the theme of a fox-trot and makes a funeral march out of it; and it is just these incongruities that are the essence of all poetry. I appeal to you for an opinion, Aurelle, as a citizen of the country which has produced Debussy and Mallarmé."

"Have you ever heard the excellent saying of Renoir, the old French painter: 'Don't ask *me,*' he said, 'whether painting ought to be subjective or objective; I confess I don't care a rap.'"

"Ah, Messiou," sighed the general, "the confounded fellow was quite right too!"

CHAPTER X

PRIVATE BROMMIT'S CONVERSION

"Paris vaut bien une messe."—
HENRI IV.

AURELLE was wakened every morning by Colonel Parker's orderly, a tough, thick-set, astute old soldier, who expounded the unwritten laws of the army for the benefit of the young Frenchman as he dexterously folded his clothes.

"You know, sir," he said, "as 'ow the British Tommy 'as to go to church in peace-time every blessed Sunday. When the time for p'rade comes along, the orficer on dooty gives the order to fall in accordin' to religions, an' the Church of England men, an' the Presbyterians an' the Cath'lics is marched up to their services, rifles an' all.

"The orficer takes charge of one of the

detachments, an' in the others the senior N.C.O. for each religion marches at the head. Wotever dodge you try on, there's no gettin' out of it.

"When once you've gone an' accepted the King's shillin', it stands to reason you've got to put up with lots o' things, but Church P'rade's *the* very limit. Don't you take me for a 'eathen, sir; I'm much more of a believer than 'eaps of others. I don't mind singin' 'ymns, an' when the preacher can talk a bit, I don't objeck to sermons. But what used to get on my nerves was the cleanin' up Sunday mornin's. You've only seen us in khaki; you don't know our peace-time church togs. Some blasted togs they were too, an' no mistake — all glitterin' with blinkin' red an' gold, an' covered with white beltin'. An' the inspection before you start wasn't no joke, I can tell you. Many's the weeks' pay I've 'ad stopped, all on account of Sunday mornin's. I'm a pretty good soldier on active service, sir — why,

you seen me at Loos, didn't you? — but what I can't stick is all them barricks an' fatigues an' cleanin' ups.

" F'r a long time I used to say to myself, ' Brommit, my boy, you're a blasted idiot — I can understand a young rookie with only two or three years' service not managin' to get out of Church P'rade, but a soldier of fifteen years' standin' ought to know the tricks of the trade by this time. If *you* can't manage to stop quietly in bed on Sunday mornin's, you ain't worth yer service stripes,' I says.

" But the more I thought about it the more 'opeless it seemed. Our colonel was old W. J. Reid — Slippery Bill we used to call 'im, 'cos 'e was as slippery as a soapy plank! 'E *was* an old monkey-face, an' no mistake.

" One day I was called up to the orderly-room to sign somethin' or other, an' I sees a poster on the wall: ' Classification according to religions ' — neat little chart it was:

'Church of England, so many — Presbyterians, so many — Catholics, so many.' You bet I didn't pay much attention to the numbers. Wot caught my eye was a column sayin', 'Wesleyans, None.' An' all of a sudden I saw my game.

"'Wesleyans, None.' So there wasn't even a bloomin' Wesleyan N.C.O. to take what Wesleyans there might be to chapel! Probably there wasn't even one bloomin' Wesleyan minister in the little Irish town where we was billeted. I saw myself at last stayin' in bed every blessed Sunday mornin'. At the very worst, if that there little religion 'ad a chapel, I'd be sent there on my own, and a detachment of one can always be trusted to find its way about. Wesleyan — that was the winner.

"Still, I 'ad one anxiety to 'old me back: I didn't for the life of me know what that there fancy religion might be. I'm not exackly a pious bloke, but I'm a good Christian, an' I didn't want to make a damned

idiot o' myself. Besides, it would probably be a serious matter, I thought, to change your religion in the army. P'r'aps I'd 'ave to see old Bill 'imself about it, an' Bill wasn't exactly one of them fellers you can take in with some 'arf-baked tale.

"It was no good trying to get to know anythink in barricks. I'd only 'ave attracted notice at an awkward moment. But I knew a girl in the town as knew people 'oo knowed, so I asked 'er to make inquiries.

"She gave me an A1 character. An' blowed if I 'adn't been an' found quite a decent religion; it suited me down to the ground. O' course you know 'oo Wesley was, sir? 'E was a feller as thought that bishops an' chaplains in 'is time didn't act accordin' to Scripture. 'E preached the return to poverty an' 'umbleness an' love of one's neighbour. You bet the Church of England couldn't swallow that! On the 'ole it was an 'onest kind of religion, an' a decent chap like me might very well 'ave

gone in for it without its appearin' too out o' the way.

"Well, when I'd got myself well primed up about old Wesley, I felt as 'ow a little interview with Bill wasn't such a terrible thing after all. So I goes to see the sergeant-major, and tells 'im I wants to speak to the colonel.

"'Wot about?' 'e asks.

"'Strickly privit,' I says.

"'E'd 'ave liked to 'ave got my story out o' me then an' there, 'e would, but I knew my only chance was to take Bill off 'is guard, so I kep' the secret of my plan of attack.

"'Well, Brommit,' says the old man quite pleasant like, 'have you got any complaint to make?'

"'No complaints, sir,' says I; 'everything's O.K. But I've asked leave to speak to you, 'cos I wanted to tell you, sir, as 'ow I intend to change my religion.'

"I saw I'd got old Bill set for once, an' no mistake.

"'Change your religion?' 'e says. 'Stuff and nonsense! Have you ever heard of such a thing, sergeant-major? What's your religion at present?'

"'Church of England, sir; but I wish to be put down in future as Wesleyan.'

"'Well, I'm —— ! Who on earth put that notion into your head, my man? Has the padre offended you, or what?'

"'Oh no, sir, not at all; on the contrary, Mr. Morrison's always been very kind to me. No, it ain't that at all, sir; but I don't believe in the Church of England no more, that's all.'

"'You don't believe any more . . . ? What don't you believe? What do *you* know about beliefs and dogmas?'

"'Why, sir, lots o' things,' I says. 'F'r instance, there's the bishops; I don't 'old with their way of livin', sir.'

"'By Jove, sergeant-major, do you hear this damned idiot? He doesn't hold with the bishops' way of living! May I ask, Brommit, where you have had occasion to observe the ways of bishops?'

"'Well, sir, Wesley was a splendid fellow . . .' An' off I starts to spit out everythink my girl 'ad managed to get 'old of, without lettin' 'im put in a word. You bet 'e'd 'ad enough of it after five minutes. 'E'd 'ave liked to shut me up, but 'e couldn't do that without grantin' me wot I was askin' for. There was no flies on *my* conversion, I can tell you; I 'ad real live scruples; I'd been thinkin' too much. You can't punish a chap becos 'e thinks too much.

"The old man knew 'is job as well as I knew mine. 'E saw at once 'e only 'ad one thing to do.

"'All right,' 'e said. 'After all, it's your own affair, my man. Sergeant-major, put him down as a Wesleyan. Brommit, you will come back to my room on Friday

evening, and meanwhile I will arrange matters with the Wesleyan minister so that you can attend the services. You know where he lives, of course?'

"'No, sir, I don't know 'im.'

"'That's rather strange. Well, never mind, I'll find him. Come back on Friday, Brommit.'

"Slippery old Bill! 'E knew a thing or two, 'e did! Next Friday evenin', when I went up to 'im, 'e says:

"'Ah! I've settled everything,' says 'e. 'I've seen the Wesleyan minister, the Rev. Mr. Short. A charming man, Mr. Short. It's settled with him that you're to go to chapel on Sunday mornings at nine and on Sunday evenings at six. Yes, there are two services; Wesleyans are very strict. Of course if by any chance you miss a service, Mr. Short is sure to let me know, and I would take the necessary steps. But there's no need to think of that, is there? A man who takes the trouble to change his religion

at the age of thirty is hardly likely to miss a service. So that's all right, Brommit.'

"Oh, damn cute 'e was, was Slippery Bill! Next Sunday off I goes to the Reverend Short's chapel. Tall, lean chap 'e was, with a real wicked face. 'E gave us an awful sermon all about 'ow we were to reform our lives, an' about all the things we was to renounce in this world, an' about the 'orrible fire as was awaitin' us in the next if we didn't follow 'is advice. After the service Mr. Short comes up to me an' asks me to stay on after the others. Blowed if 'e didn't keep me till twelve o'clock jawin' me about the dooties my noo faith brought me an' about wot I read an' 'oo I talked to. By the time I got away from 'im I was 'arf stunned; an' I 'ad to go again in the evenin'!

"Every blinkin' Sunday the same thing 'appened. I used to spend the 'ole week swearin' and sendin' Short an' Wesley to the 'ottest place in the world. Once I tried

on not goin' to chapel; but the miserable old 'ound split on me to the colonel, an' I 'ad a week's pay stopped. Then that there blessed Congregation invented Friday evenin' lectures; and the converted soldier, sent by kind permission of the colonel, was the finest ornament they 'ad.

"Well, wot put an end to my patience was a month later, when Short 'ad the cheek to jaw me personally about the girl I was walkin' out with. I went clean mad then, an' was ready for anythink, even for 'avin' it out again with Bill, rather than put up with that maniac's talk.

"'Please, sir,' I tells the colonel, 'I'm sorry to trouble you again with my religion, but this 'ere Wesleyanism don't satisfy me at all. It ain't a bit wot I'd 'oped for.'

"I expected to get jolly well strafed, but I didn't. Bill just looked at me with a smile.

"'That's all right, Brommit,' 'e said; 'the Government pays me for looking after the

moral health of my men. And may I inquire what religion is at present enjoying the favour of your approval?'

"'Well, sir, I don't see none at all. I've made myself a sort o' religion o' my own — if you'll allow it, of course.'

"'I? Why, it's none of *my* business, Brommit. On the contrary, I admire the vitality of your mind. You've evidently got beliefs of your own; that's a very good sign indeed. It's just that they will not admit the obligation of going to a place of public worship on a Sunday, that's all. I presume I am taking you correctly?'

"'Yes, sir, quite correctly.'

"'What an admirable coincidence, Brommit! For a long time I've been looking for somebody to scrub the stairs thoroughly on Sundays, while the men are at church. "Sergeant-major, put Brommit down as an Agnostic — on permanent fatigue for scrubbing the stairs on Sunday mornings."'"

CHAPTER XI

JUSTICE

THE D.M.S. had sent round a note to all A.D.M.S.'s reminding them that all officers and men were to be inoculated against typhoid fever. So the A.D.M.S. of the Scottish Division ordered the different units to send in a nominal roll of all those who had not been inoculated. Most of the negligent confessed their sin; many of them were believers, and those who were not, respected the customs of their times and piously submitted to the ceremony.

Only the 113th Battery, R.F.A., sent in the following roll:

Names.	Condition.	Reason given for exemption.
Capt. Cockell.... Lieut. Little..... Lieut. M'Cracken	Not yet inoculated. Refuse inoculation.	Do not believe in the efficacy of the operation.

The A.D.M.S. in high dudgeon complained to the Staff and requested the temporal powers to deliver the heretics over to the lancet. The temporal powers, while paying due reverence to medical infallibility, requested the A.D.M.S. to attempt a conversion.

The 113th Battery was famous for its courage and its daring deeds. Dr. O'Grady was entrusted with the mission of visiting Captain Cockell and bringing that erring soul back to the fold.

The gunners gave the doctor a warm welcome. Their dug-out was comfortable, their arm-chairs, made by the men out of the branches of fir-trees, were luxuriously low and deep. O'Grady dropped into one, and looked about him anxiously.

"It is a remarkable fact," he said, "that thirst and hunger should make themselves felt by sensations in the mouth and stomach only, and not in the rest of the body. At this very moment, when all my organs are

quite dry for lack of decent whisky, I am only warned by the mucous membrane in my mouth ——"

"Orderly! The whisky! Quick!" shouted Captain Cockell.

Whereupon the doctor, his mind set at rest, was able to explain the object of his mission.

"Doctor," answered Captain Cockell, "there is nothing I would not do for you. But I consider anti-typhoid inoculation, next to poison-gas, to be the most dangerous practice in this war."

The doctor, who was a skilful reader of character, saw at once that only liberal doctrines would help him to success.

"Oh," he exclaimed genially, "you needn't think I share the usual medical superstitions. But I do believe that inoculation has practically done away with deaths caused by typhoid. Statistics show ——"

"Doctor, you know as well as I do that statistics may be made to say anything one

likes. There are fewer cases of typhoid in this war than in former wars simply because the general sanitary conditions are much better. Besides, when a fellow who has been inoculated is silly enough to be ill — and that *has* been known to occur — you simply say, 'It isn't typhoid — it's para-typhoid.'"

"Which is perfectly true," said the doctor; "the pseudo-bacillus ——"

"Oh, that stunt about the pseudo-bacillus! Next time you're wounded, doctor, I'll say it was by a pseudo-shell!"

"Very well, very well," said the doctor, somewhat nettled. "I'll just wait till next time you're ill. Then we'll see whether you despise doctors or not."

"That's a poor argument, doctor, very poor indeed. I'm quite ready to acknowledge that a sick man is in need of moral support and requires the illusion of a remedy, just like a woman in love. Therefore doctors are necessary, just like thought-

readers. I simply submit it should be recognized that both professions are of a similar order."

The energetic Cockell had inspired his two young lieutenants with respectful admiration. They remained as firm as he in their refusal; and after an excellent lunch Dr. O'Grady returned to H.Q. and informed his chief of the cynicism of the 113th Battery and the obstinacy of the heretical sect in those parts.

The A.D.M.S. sent the names of the three officers up to H.Q., and demanded the general's authority to put a stop to this scandal; and Colonel Parker promised to let the Corps know of the matter.

. . . . .

Some time before this, the French Government had placed at the disposal of the British authorities a certain number of "Legion of Honour" decorations — to wit, two Grand Officer's badges, twelve Commander's cravats, twenty-four Officer's ro-

settes, and a considerable number of Knight's crosses.

The two Governments were in the habit of exchanging armfuls of ribbons at regular intervals in this way, and the apportioning of these trifles created a useful occupation for the numerous members of all staffs and their still more numerous clerks.

The distribution was performed according to wisely appointed rules. Of each batch of decorations G.H.Q. took one half for its own members, and passed on the other half to the Army Staffs. The Army Staffs kept half of what they received, and passed on the remainder to the Corps Staffs. The same method was applied right down to the Battalion Staffs, and it will readily be observed (with the help of an elementary arithmetical calculation) that the likelihood of the men in the line ever receiving a foreign decoration was practically non-existent.

The Scottish Division received as its share

on this occasion three crosses. Colonel Parker and the other demi-gods of the divisional Olympus being already provided for, these were allotted to dignitaries of minor importance. It was decided that one should be given to Dr. O'Grady, who had done great service to the French population (he had assisted a Belgian refugee in childbirth and she had survived his ministrations). The second was marked down for the D.A.D.O.S., and the third for the A.D.V.S., a genial fellow who was very popular in the mess.

The names of the three lucky men were handed by a Staff officer to an intelligent clerk with orders to draw up immediately a set of nominal rolls for the Corps.

Unfortunately the clerk happened to be the very same man to whom Colonel Parker had given the list of the three heretics of the 113th Battery the day before. But who can blame him for having confused two groups of three names? And who can

blame the officer on duty for having signed two nominal rolls without reading them?

A month later, the Division was surprised to hear that Captain Cockell and Lieutenants Little and M'Cracken had been made Knights of the Legion of Honour. As they really deserved it, the choice caused considerable astonishment and general rejoicing; and the three warriors, happy to see three decorations reach them intact after having passed through so many covetous hands, were loud in praise of their superior officers' discrimination.

CHAPTER XII

VARIATIONS

"I have no illusions left but the Archbishop of Canterbury."—SYDNEY SMITH.

"WHEN I was attached to a field-ambulance," said the doctor, "we had three padres with us in the mess."

"That was rather a large order," said the Rev. Mr. Jeffries.

"It *was* a large order," agreed the doctor, "but one of them anyway was quite harmless. The R.C. padre spoke very little, ate an enormous amount, and listened with infinite contempt to the discussions of his colleagues.

"I don't want to hurt your feelings, padre, but Catholicism is *the* only religion. A faith is only justified if it carries convic-

tion. What's the use of a creed or a dogma which is as transient as a philosophy? Being condemned by my profession to study beings whose moral balance is unstable, I am in a position to assert that the Roman Church has a complete understanding of human nature. As a psychologist and a doctor, I admire the uncompromising attitude of the Councils. So much weakness and stupidity require the firm support of an authority without the slightest tolerance. The curative value of a doctrine lies not in its logical truth, but in its permanency."

"It is quite true," said Colonel Parker, "that nothing short of the rigid dictates of Catholicism could have prevented the Irish from going completely mad. But don't judge every one from your own case, O'Grady; the Saxons possess a solid, Protestant intelligence."

"Well," the doctor continued, "our other two padres spent their evenings trying to

swallow each other up. One of them was Church of England and the other Presbyterian; and they employed the most modern commercial methods in their competition. Church of England found an old gipsy cart which he set up at Dickebusch and from which he sold chocolate to the Jocks; whereupon Church of Scotland installed a telescope at Kruystraete to show them the stars. If the one formed a cigar-trust, the other made a corner in cigarettes. If one of them introduced a magic lantern, the other chartered a cinema. But the permanent threat to the peace of the mess was undoubtedly the Baptist question.

"As we had no Baptist padre, the unfortunate soldiers of that persuasion (of whom there were seven in the Division) could attend no service. The astonishing thing was that they never seemed to realize the extent of their misfortune.

"On one point at any rate our two padres

agreed: men could not be left, in the dangerous zone in which we were then living, without the consolations of religion. But both Church of England and Church of Scotland each claimed the right to annex this tiny neutral congregation.

"'Excuse me,' said Church of Scotland; 'the Baptist, it is true, only performs the immersion ceremony when the adult's faith is confirmed, but on all other points he resembles the Presbyterian. His Church is a democratic one and is opposed to episcopacy, like ours.'

"'Pardon me,' said Church of England; 'the Baptist, in demanding a return to the primitive form of the Sacrament, proves himself to be the most conservative of all British Christians. Now every one — including yourself — admits that the Church of England is the most conservative of all the Reformed Churches. Besides ——'

"For hours at a time they used to go on like this, and the futile discussion became

even more annoying as I got to know the different arguments as well as either of them.

"One day I was sent up to the ambulance's advance post at Maple Copse — you know, that little wood in front of Ypres."

"Unhealthy spot that," said the general.

"So unhealthy, sir, that while I was there a whizz-bang hit my dug-out and blew my sergeant into small pieces, which remained hanging on the branches of the trees. It was a pity, for he was the best forward in the brigade football team. I put all I could find of him into a cloth, announced the burial for the next day, and then, as it was my turn to be relieved, I went back to the ambulance headquarters.

"My return was distinctly lively. On leaving the splendid trench which is called Zillebeke Road, I was silly enough to cross the exposed ground near the railway embankment. A machine gun thought it

rather amusing to have a pot at me from Hill 60 ——"

"All right, doctor," said General Bramble, "spare us the details."

"Well, just as I left Ypres, I came across a Ford car which took me back to camp. In the mess I found Church of England and Church of Scotland arguing away as usual, while Roman Church was reading his breviary in a corner.

"'Satan, whence comest thou?' one of them asked me.

"'Well, gentlemen,' I replied, 'you ought to be glad to see me, because I really am back from hell this time.'

"And I told them my adventures, putting in a lot of local colour about cannonades, explosions, whistling bullets and hailstorm barrages, in a style worthy of our best war correspondents."

"You old humbug!" grunted the colonel.

"'By the way,' I concluded, 'I've got a

job for one of you! Freshwater, my sergeant, has been blown to bits, and what I could collect of him is to be buried tomorrow morning. I'll give you the route — Messines gate, Zillebeke ——'

"I saw the two padres' faces fall swiftly.

"'What religion?' they both asked simultaneously.

"'Baptist,' I replied carelessly. 'Have a cigarette, padre?'

"The two enemies gazed attentively at the ceiling; Roman Church kept his nose in his breviary and his ears well pricked up.

"'Well,' said Church of England at length, 'I wouldn't mind going up to Zillebeke. I've been in worse places to bury a man of my own Church. But for a Baptist it strikes me, O'Grady ——'

"'Excuse me,' interrupted Church of Scotland. 'Baptism is the most conservative form of British Christianity, and the Anglican Church itself boasts ——'

"'I dare say, I dare say,' said the other,

'but is not the Baptist Church a democratic one, like the Presbyterian?'

"They might have gone on in this strain till the poor beggar was in his grave, had not Roman Church suddenly interrupted in a mild voice, without taking his nose out of his little book:

"'I'll go, if you like.'

"Hatred of Popery is the beginning of union, and they both went up the line together."

CHAPTER XIII

THE CURE

"Le *Schein* et le *Wesen* sont, pour l'esprit allemand, une seule et même chose."—JACQUES RIVIÈRE.

"THE only decent whisky," said the doctor, "is Irish whisky." Whereupon he helped himself to a generous allowance of Scotch whisky, and as they had just been talking about Ludendorff's coming offensive, he began to discourse upon the Germans.

"One of the most astounding things about German psychology," he said, "is their passion for suggesting the appearance of results which they know they are powerless to attain. A German general who is not in a position to undertake a real offensive deludes himself into believing that he will strike terror into his opponent by de-

scribing an absurd and appalling attack in his reports; and a Solingen cutler, if he cannot manufacture really sharp blades at the required price, will endeavour to invoke a sort of metaphysical blade which can give its owner the illusion of a useful instrument.

"When once this trait of the national character is properly understood, all the German shoddy which is so much talked about seems no longer the swindling practice of dishonest tradesmen, but is simply the material expression of their ingrained Kantianism, and their congenital inability to distinguish Appearance from Reality.

"At the sanatorium at Wiesdorf, where I was working when the war broke out, this method was practised with quite unusual rigour.

"Doctor Professor Baron von Göteburg was a second-rate scientist, and he knew it. He had made a lifelong study of the expression, clothes and manners which would most successfully impress his clients with

the idea that he was the great physician he knew he could never be.

"After innumerable careful experiments, which do him the greatest credit, he had decided on a pointed beard, a military expression, a frock coat and a baron's title.

"Everything in his admirable establishment bore the impress of the kind of scientific precision which is the most striking hall-mark of ignorance. The Wiesdorf sanatorium extracted from the human carcase the maximum amount of formulæ, scientific jargon and professional fees which it could possibly yield. The patients felt themselves surrounded by a pleasant and luxurious apparatus of diagnoses, figures and diagrams.

"Each patient had a suite of rooms furnished, in spite of a rather obvious Munich atmosphere, with a sense of real comfort and order. Each floor was under the supervision of a doctor, a lean, athletic Swedish *masseur* and a qualified nurse in a white

apron. The nurses were nearly all daughters of the nobility, whose happiness had been sacrificed to the extravagance of their brothers, who were generally captains in the Guards. The one attached to the floor I was in charge of was a French Alsatian with an innocent, obstinate face, whom the Germans called ' Schwester Therese,' and who asked me to call her ' Sœur Thérèse.'

" The place was only opened in the spring of 1914, and from the very first season its success had testified to the excellence of the system. Photographs were published in all the fashionable papers, and wealthy clients rushed in with alarming and automatic rapidity.

" On my floor I had an old American, one James P. Griffith, an English lady, the Duchess of Broadfield, and a Russian, Princess Uriassof. None of these three patients displayed symptoms of any illness whatsoever; they just complained of depression — nothing could amuse them — and of

an appetite which no dish could tempt. When the American arrived, I considered it my duty to inform the professor of the excellent health in which I found him.

"'O'Grady,' he said, staring hard at me with his brilliant, commanding eyes, 'kindly give yourself less trouble. Your patient is suffering from congestion of the purse, and I think we shall be able to give him some relief.'

"The Duchess of Broadfield longed to put on flesh, and wept all day long. 'Madam,' Sister Therese said to her, 'if you want to get stouter, you ought to try and enjoy yourself.' That caused a nice scene! I was obliged to explain to the nurse that the Duchess was on no account to be spoken to before eleven in the morning, and that it was improper to address her without calling her 'Your Grace!'

"As to Princess Uriassof, she had been preceded by a courier, who had burst into indignant exclamations at the sight of

the Munich furniture and had demanded genuine antiques. The professor smiled, and summoned a furniture dealer and his cashier. Followed the princess with twenty-three boxes and six servants. She was enormously stout, cried the whole day long, and yearned to reduce her figure.

"When the lift that was to take her down to the bathroom was not in front of her door at the very second when she left her room, she used to stamp her foot in anger, pull her maid's hair and shout:

"'What? *I* have to wait; *I*, Princess Uriassof?'

"That was the kind of patient we had. Only once there came to my floor a young fellow from the Argentine who really had something wrong with his liver. I said to him, 'You are not well; you would do better to go and see a doctor.'

"Towards the 24th of July the newspapers seemed to cause the noble clients of Wiesdorf sanatorium considerable anxiety.

The note to Servia, the letters they received from their homes, the clatter of arms which was beginning to be heard throughout Europe, all began to point to a vague danger which could not, of course, affect their sacred persons, but might possibly hinder them from peacefully cultivating the sufferings which were so dear to them.

" The Duchess of Broadfield telegraphed to her nephew at the Foreign Office and got no answer. Princess Uriassof began to hold mysterious confabulations with her courier.

" The German doctors soon restored every one's confidence; '*Unser Friedens-Kaiser* . . . our peace-loving Emperor . . . he is cruising on his yacht . . . he has not the slightest thought of war.'

" The barometers of refreshment vendors are always at ' set-fair,' and Professor von Göteburg temporized with such authority and diplomacy that he managed to keep his international *clientèle* for another six days.

"However, the peace-loving Emperor returned only to send threatening telegrams, and on the 27th the danger became evident even to our guests' bird-like intellects.

"Princess Uriassof announced her departure, and sent her courier to the bank to cash an enormous cheque. He came back with the message that the bank no longer cashed foreign cheques; whereupon he disappeared, and was never heard of again. The Princess was beside herself with rage, and cried that she would have him knouted. She summoned her German valet, but he was busy buckling on his *Feldwebel* uniform. She ordered her French chauffeur to be ready to start instantly; I went down to the garage with the message myself so as to get away from her, and discovered that the fellow was a reservist from Saint-Mihiel, and had left with Her Highness' car to join his regiment.

"That morning for the first time, the Duchess and the Princess condescended to

notice the presence of James P. He had a magnificent 100 H.P. American car, and represented their only hope of getting across the frontier. But James P. had no more petrol, and the Germans refused to supply him with any, because his car had already been earmarked for General von Schmack's Staff.

"The same evening these first three victims of the war sat and childishly discussed the situation in an untidy room on a bed which nobody came to make. Their telegrams were no longer forwarded, their money was worthless, and the German servants in the sanatorium treated them more as prisoners than as patients. It seemed as though their fortune and their greatness had suddenly abandoned them at the first breath of war, like a slender veil torn by the wind from a woman's shoulders.

"James P. went to interview Dr. von Göteburg, who answered him with ironical politeness, and depicted the pitiable plight

of a Germany surrounded and attacked by a world of enemies. If, however, they were willing to leave him the princess's pearl necklace as security, he would consent to lend them the few marks they needed to cross the frontier.

"Towards midnight I entered the room where this Twilight of the Gods was drawing to an end, and saw an astounding spectacle. The Duchess of Broadfield and Princess Uriassof were attempting to pack their own trunks. Their lack of experience was only too conspicuous. In every corner there lay hats which had been crushed by their clumsy attempts; the badly folded dresses swelled awkwardly and refused with disgraceful obstinacy to allow the Princess to lock her trunks. Vanquished at last by the stress of events against which she was contending for the first time in her life, she sat down on a portmanteau and burst into tears. The Duchess, who came of a less

fatalistic race, was still struggling, aided by James P., with two rebellious valises.

"I went and called Sister Therese, and with her made ready for their departure. Hoping that England would declare war, I informed the professor of my intention to accompany my patients.

"The little Alsatian girl went and asked the German servants to carry the luggage to the station for the last civilian train, which was to leave at six in the morning.

"I don't mind carrying anything for you, *Schwester,*" said the hall porter, "but I won't do a thing for those dogs of Russians and English."

"The Sister came back and said timidly, 'If the doctor and Your Grace don't mind helping me, we might perhaps take at least some of these things together.'

"So Wiesdorf station beheld the extraordinary sight of the Duchess pulling an enormous portmanteau and perspiring

freely, and behind her Princess Uriassof, James P., and myself, each pushing a wheelbarrow. The station was already thronged with soldiers in *Feldgrau*. We were ravenously hungry. I asked the young Alsatian girl to accompany me to the refreshment-room, and she was able, thanks to her nurse's bonnet, to obtain two pieces of extremely dry bread from the military canteen.

"I found my patients ensconced in a fourth-class carriage. Their eyes were shut, they were leaning against the dirty wooden back of the seat, and on their faces was a smile of indescribable bliss.

"The Princess greedily seized the piece of bread I handed her, took an enormous bite out of it, and said to the Duchess:

"'What nice bread!'

"'What nice seats!' replied Her Grace, leaning voluptuously against the hard, greasy boards."

CHAPTER XIV

THE BEGINNING OF THE END

"All the way talking of Russia, which, he says, is a sad place."
—PEPYS (Sept. 16th, 1664).

FOR three days our soldiers had been advancing over the devastated plain of the Somme. The crests of the innumerable shell-holes gave the country the appearance of a sort of frozen angry sea. The victors were advancing light-heartedly, as though preceded by invisible drums.

It was just at the time when the German army was swaying and tottering like a spent boxer awaiting the inevitable knock-out.

The Division had suffered heavily. All along the roads they had seen for the second time the sinister spectacle of villagers in

flight and furniture-laden carts drawn by bowed women.

General Bramble had looked at the map with painful astonishment. He had been ordered to resist at all costs along the trenches on the green line; but when he reached the green line he had found no trenches; the Chinamen who were to dig them were still at sea somewhere near Suez.

Then, in a corner of a ruined village, they had come across a green felt hat and a fearsome moustache, which turned out reassuringly to belong to a rocking, tottering old man; and the Tommies — who are a primitive and adventurous race — were glad of the protection of this wild old totem of the Frankish tribe.

Then came motor-lorries to take the whole Division to the North, and through all the bustle and disorder they were conscious of a giant hand trying with prudent and skilful movements to rebuild the line.

"What can a general do?" the doctor had asked. "This war is too vast to be affected by human volition. Victory will come through tiny, decisive forces that have been at work since the beginning of the world. Tolstoy's Kutusoff used to go to sleep in Council — yet he beat Napoleon."

"However vast the scale of circumstance may be," said the colonel, "a man can change everything. A child cannot push a railway engine; yet he can start it if he opens the right throttle. A man has only to apply his will at the right place, and he will be master of the world. Your determinism is nothing more than a paradox. You build a cage round yourself and then are astonished you are a prisoner."

They were going forward rapidly. Aurelle, mounted on his old white Arab, trotted between the doctor and Colonel Parker.

"Don't hold your horse in so tightly, Messiou; give him the rein."

"But the road's full of holes, sir."

"My dear chap, when a man is on a horse, the horse is always the more intelligent of the pair."

He slackened his mare's rein to pass by a huge shell-hole, and began to talk of the peace that was at hand.

"The most difficult thing of all," he said, "will be to preserve in our victory the virtues that won it for us. Germany and Russia will do their best to corrupt us. A dishonoured nation always tries to bury its shame under the ruins of the victor's civilization. It's the device of Samson; it's as old as history itself. Rome, surrounded by vanquished and humbled nations, witnessed the lightning speed of Judaic preaching, which was so much like the Bolshevism of our day. The Russian ghettos of our capitals had their counterpart then in the Syrian dens that swarmed in the large ports; that is where the apostles of mystical communism preached most successfully. And

Juvenal and Tacitus, who were gentlemen, had good reason to detest those anarchists, who condemned Roman civilization with the fanatical fury of a Trotsky."

"Yes," said the doctor, "the danger of these prolonged wars is that they end by making the most unusual habits generally acceptable. They require courage; and courage is a dangerous virtue, the mother of revolutions. And it is not easy to accustom a nation of warriors to render due obedience once more to second-rate politicians and profiteers. The oligarchy of *parvenus* which arose after the Punic wars could not be respected as the Roman senate had been. They possessed neither its hardihood nor its heroic parsimony. Bent only on beautiful slaves, perfumes and luxuries, they sacrificed their nascent influence to their passion for pleasure. They did not last long."

"It is quite certain," the colonel continued, "that in order to survive, an aris-

tocracy must be hard upon itself. Moral discipline is indispensable to any class that wants to govern. If the industrial middle class is to take our place, it will have to be austere and hard. What sealed once and for all the doom of the Roman Senators was the decadent Greek culture of their sons. Those young noblemen affected an elegant dilettantism and toyed pleasantly with cultured demagogy. Cæsar in his youth, Aurelle, was rather like one of your comfortable cultured French middle-class Socialists. His lifelong dream was to lead a moderate reform party, but he was embittered by the attacks of the Roman patricians. He is a type against whom our Public Schools protect us pretty well. We also have our decadent young lords, but the contempt of their own generation keeps them from doing much harm."

He stopped in order to salute a magpie — for he was very superstitious — pointed with his cane to a tank that lay buried on its

back in the sand like a defeated tortoise, and went on:

"Do you think you will have a revolution in France after the war? If you do, I shall be very much surprised. Up till now the remembrance of 1793 has kept us looking with apprehension towards France as the danger-spot of Europe. To-day we realize our mistake.

"1793 made your country more conservative than any other, by giving your peasants the possession of the soil. It will probably be seen some years hence that the Russian Revolution has also had the same effect. The revolution will end when the Red armies return to Moscow and some unemployed Bonapartsky has the Soviets dispersed by his grenadiers. Then the *moujiks* who have acquired the national property will form the first layer of a respectable liberal bourgeois republic."

"Unless," said Aurelle, "Bonapartsky, having tasted the sweets of victory, sets out

to conquer Europe with the help of his trusty grenadiers. Between the Terror and 'the respectable republic' there were twenty years of war, sir."

"The most terrible of all revolutions," began the doctor, "will be the English one. In France the intellectual is popular; the tribune of the people is a bearded professor with the kindest of hearts. In England the people's commissary will be a hard, clean-shaven, silent, cruel man."

"That may be," said the colonel; "but he will find more silent and still harder men up against him. If you think we are going to lie down and submit like the fatalist nobles of Petrograd, you are mistaken."

"You, sir? And why the devil should *you* defend business men and profiteers whom you are never tired of sending to perdition?"

"I shall not be defending profiteers, but a form of society which I hold to be neces-

sary. The institutions which our ancestors have adopted after six thousand years' experience are worth ten times more than the systems of foolish and boastful hotheads. I stand always for what is."

With a sweeping gesture the doctor pointed to the twisted, rusty wire, the shattered walls, the mangled trees and the dense harvest of wooden crosses that rose from the barren soil.

"Allow me," he said, "to express the heartfelt admiration I feel for this venerable civilization of yours, and let me contemplate the fruits of these wise institutions which six thousand years have consecrated for you. Six thousand years of war, six thousand years of murder, six thousand years of misery, six thousand years of prostitution; one half of mankind busy asphyxiating the other half; famine in Europe, slavery in Asia, women sold in the streets of Paris or London like matches or boot-

laces — there is the glorious achievement of our ancestors. It is well worth dying to defend, I must confess!"

"Yes, doctor," replied Aurelle; "but there are two sides to the question: six thousand years of reform, six thousand years of revolt, six thousand years of science, six thousand years of philosophy ——"

"Now don't you run away with the idea that I'm a revolutionary. As far as I am concerned, the movements of men interest me no more than those of the spiders or the dogs I am so fond of observing. I know that all the speeches in the world will not prevent men from being jealous monkeys always greedy for food, females and bright stones. It is true that they know how to deck out their desires with a somewhat brilliant and delusive ideology, but it is easy for an expert to recognize the instinct beneath the thought. Every doctrine is an autobiography. Every philosophy demands

a diagnosis. Tell me the state of your digestion, and I shall tell you the state of your mind."

"Oh, doctor, if that is so, life is not worth living."

"That, my boy, depends entirely upon the liver, as they say."

Young Dundas, who had just reined up level with them, interposed:

"My God, my God," he said, "how you chaps do love talking! Why, I once had a discussion myself at Oxford with one of those johnnies in a bowler hat and ready-made tie who go round and make speeches in public squares on Saturday afternoons. I had stopped to listen to him on my way back from a bathe. He was cursing the aristocracy, the universities, and the world in general. Well, after about five minutes' talking, I went right up to him and said, 'Off with your coat, my friend; let's go into the matter thoroughly.'"

"And did you convince him, Dundas?"

"It wasn't very difficult, Messiou, because, honestly, I could use my left better than he could."

CHAPTER XV

DANSE MACABRE

"Magical dancing still goes on in Europe to-day." — Sir James Fraser.

"DOCTOR," said General Bramble, "this morning I received from London two new fox-trots for my gramophone."

Ever since the Armistice sent the Scottish Division into rest on the Norman coast, the Infant Dundas had been running a course of dancing-lessons at the mess, which were patronized by the most distinguished "red-hats."

Aurelle emerged from behind an unfolded copy of the *Times*.

"Things look very rotten," he said. "The Germans are taking heart again; you are demobbing; the Americans are sailing

away; and soon only we and the Italians will be left alone to face the European chaos ——"

"Aurelle," said Colonel Parker, "take off your coat and come and learn the one-step — that'll be a jolly sight better than sitting moping there all the evening."

"You know I don't dance, sir."

"You're very silly," said Parker. "A man who doesn't dance is an enemy of mankind. The dancer, like the bridge-player, cannot exist without a partner, so he can't help being sociable. But you — why, a book is all the company you want. You're a bad citizen."

The doctor emptied his glass of brandy at one gulp, removed his coat, and joined the colonel in his attack upon the young Frenchman.

"A distinguished Irish naturalist, Mr. James Stephens," he said, "has noticed that love of dancing varies according to innocence of heart. Thus children, lambs and

dogs like dancing. Policemen, lawyers and fish dance very little because they are hard-hearted. Worms and Members of Parliament, who, besides their remarkable all-round culture, have many points in common, dance but rarely owing to the thickness of the atmosphere in which they live. Frogs and high hills, if we are to believe the Bible ——"

"Doctor," interrupted the general, "I put you in charge of the gramophone; top speed, please."

The orderlies pushed the table into a corner, and the aide-de-camp, holding his general in a close embrace, piloted him respectfully but rhythmically round the room.

"One, two . . . one, two. It's a simple walk, sir, but a sort of glide. Your feet mustn't leave the ground."

"Why not?" asked the general.

"It's the rule. Now twinkle."

"Twinkle? What's that?" asked the general.

"It's a sort of hesitation, sir; you put out your left foot, then you bring it sharply back against the right, and start again with the right foot. Left, back again, and quickly right. Splendid, sir."

The general, who was a man of precision, asked how many steps he was to count before twinkling again. The rosy-cheeked one explained that it didn't matter, you could change steps whenever you liked.

"But look here," said General Bramble, "how is my partner to know when I'm going to twinkle?"

"Oh," said the aide-de-camp, "you must hold her near enough for her to feel the slightest movement of your body."

"Humph!" grunted the general. And after a moment's thought he added, "Couldn't you get up some mixed dances here?"

From the depths of the arm-chair came Aurelle's joyful approval.

"I've never been able to make out," he

said, "what pleasure you men can find in dancing together. Dancing is a sentimental pantomime, a kind of language of the body which allows it to express an understanding which the soul dare not confess. What was dancing for primitive man? Nothing but a barbaric form of love."

"What a really French idea!" exclaimed Colonel Parker. "I should say rather that love is a barbaric form of dancing. Love is animal; dancing is human. It's more than an art; it's a sport."

"Quite right," said Aurelle. "Since the British nation deems worthy of the name of sport any exercise which is at once useless, tiring and dangerous, I am quite ready to admit that dancing answers this definition in every way. Nevertheless, among savages ——"

"Aurelle, my boy, don't talk to me about savages!" said Parker. "You've never been out of your beloved Europe. Now I have lived among the natives of Australia

and Malay; and their dances were not sentimental pantomimes, as you call them, at all, but warlike exercises for their young soldiers, that took the place of our Swedish drill and bayonet practice. Besides, it is not so very long since these close embraces were adopted in our own countries. Your minuets and pavanes were respecters of persons, and the ancients, who liked looking at dancing girls, never stooped to twirling them round."

"That's quite easy to understand," put in the doctor. "What did they want with dancing? The directness of their customs made such artificial devices for personal contact quite unnecessary. It's only our Victorian austerity which makes these rhythmical embraces so attractive. Puritan America loves to waggle her hips, and ——"

"Doctor," said the general, "turn the record over, will you, and put on speed eighty; it's a jazz."

"What's worrying me," began Aurelle,

who had returned once more to his paper, "is that our oracles are taking the theory of nationality so seriously. A nation is a living organism, but a nationality is nothing. Take the Jugo-Slavs, for instance ——"

At that moment the doctor produced such an ear-splitting racket from the gramophone that the interpreter let his *Times* fall to the ground.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed; "have you broken it, doctor?"

"Broken it?" repeated the doctor in mild surprise.

"You don't mean to tell me that all that noise of broken crockery and fog-horns was deliberately put together by a human brain?"

"You know nothing about it," said the doctor. "This negro music is excellent stuff. Negroes are much finer artists than we are; they alone can still feel the holy delirium which ranked the first singers among the gods. . . ."

His voice was drowned by the sinister racket of the jazz, which made a noise like a barrage of 4.2 howitzers in a thunderstorm.

"Jazz!" shouted the general to his aide-de-camp, bostoning majestically the while. "Jazz — Dundas, what *is* jazz?"

"Anything you like, sir," replied the rosy-cheeked one. "You've just got to follow the music."

"Humph!" said the general, much astonished.

"Doctor," said Aurelle gravely, "we may now be witnessing the last days of a civilization which with all its faults was not without a certain grace. Don't you think that under the circumstances there might be something better for us to do than tango awkwardly to this ear-splitting din?"

"My dear boy," said the doctor, "what would you do if some one stuck a pin into your leg? Well, war and peace have driven more than one spike into the hide of hu-

manity; and of course she howls and dances with the pain. It's just a natural reflex action. Why, they had a fox-trot epidemic just like this after the Black Death in the fourteenth century; only then they called it St. Vitus's dance."

CHAPTER XVI

THE GLORY OF THE GARDEN

"But the Glory of the Garden
Lies in more than meets the eye."
—R. KIPLING.

A FAREWELL dinner was being given to Aurelle by the officers of the Scottish Division, with whom he had spent four years of danger and hardship.

Before they sat down, they made him drink a cocktail and a glass of sherry, and then an Italian vermouth tuned up with a drop of gin. Their eager affection, and this curiously un-British mixing of drinks, made him feel that on this last evening he was no longer a member of the mess, but its guest.

"I hope," said Colonel Parker, "that you will be a credit to the education we have given you, and that you will at last manage

to empty your bottle of champagne without assistance."

"I'll try," said Aurelle, "but the war has ended too soon, and I've still a lot to learn."

"That's a fact," grumbled the colonel. "This damned peace has come at a most unfortunate moment. Everything was just beginning to get into shape. I had just bought a cinema for the men; our gunners were working better every day; there was a chance of my becoming a general, and Dundas was teaching me jazz. And then the politicians poke their noses in and go and make peace, and Clemenceau demobs Aurelle! Life's just one damned thing after another!"

"*Wee, Messiou,*" sighed General Bramble, "it's a pity to see you leaving us. Can't you stay another week?"

"I'm sorry, sir, but I'm to be demobbed with the third batch, and I've got my warrant in my pocket. I'm to report tomorrow at Montreuil-sur-Mer; from there

I shall be sent to Arras, and then dispatched to Versailles, after which, if I survive the journey, I shall be at liberty to return to Paris. I should be delighted to stay a few days, but I suppose I must obey the pompous military maxim and 'share the fortunes of my comrades.'"

"Why," said Colonel Parker, "are people so idiotic as to discharge soldiers whose return is dreaded by civilians and whose presence is necessary to the comfort of the Staff? We English adopted a much more intelligent plan for *our* demobilization. The men were to be classified according to their professions, and were only to be released when workmen of their occupation were required in England. In this way we were to avoid unemployment trouble. All the details were most clearly explained in a bulky volume; it was really an excellent plan. Well, when it came to be actually worked, everything went as badly as could be. Every one complained; there were

small riots which were dramatized in the newspapers; and after some weeks' trial we returned to your system of classes, Aurelle, which makes for equality and is idiotic."

"It was easy to foresee," said the doctor, "that any regulation which neglected human nature was bound to fail. Man, that absurd and passionate animal, cannot thrive under an intelligent system. To be acceptable to the majority a law must be unjust. The French demobilization system is inane, and that is why it is so good."

"Doctor," said the general, "I cannot allow you to say that the French method is inane; this is the last evening Messiou is spending with us, and I will not have him annoyed."

"It doesn't matter a bit," said Aurelle; "neither of them knows what he's talking about. It is quite true that things are going rather better in France than elsewhere, in spite of absurd decrees and orders. But

that's not because our laws are unjust; it's because no one takes them seriously. In England your weakness is that if you are ordered to demobilize men by classes, you'll do it. We *say* we're doing it, but by means of all sorts of reprieves, small irregularities and reasonable injustices, we manage *not* to do it. Some barbarous bureaucrat has decreed that the interpreter Aurelle should, in order to be demobilized, accomplish the circuit Montreuil-Arras-Versailles in a cattle-truck. It is futile and vexatious; but do you suppose I shall do it? Never in your life! To-morrow morning I shall calmly proceed to Paris by the express. I shall exhibit a paper covered with seals to a scribe at the G.M.P., who will utter a few lamentations as a matter of form, and demobilize me with much grumbling. With us the great principle of public justice is that no one is supposed to respect the laws; this is what has enabled us to beat Germany."

"Humph!" muttered the general, much taken aback.

"Doctor," said Colonel Parker, "help Messiou Aurelle to some champagne; his mind is far too clear."

Corks began to pop with the rapidity of machine guns. Colonel Parker began a speech about the charming, kind and affectionate disposition of the women of Burma; the doctor preferred Japanese women for technical reasons.

"French women are also very beautiful," said General Bramble politely; for he could not forget this was Aurelle's farewell dinner.

When the orderlies had brought the port, he struck the table twice sharply with the handle of his knife, and said, with a pleasant mixture of solemnity and geniality:

"Now, gentlemen, as our friend is leaving us after having so excellently represented his country amongst us for the last

four years, I propose that we drink his health with musical honours."

All the officers stood up, glass in hand. Aurelle was about to follow their example, when Colonel Parker crushed him with a whispered, *"Assee, Messiou, poor l'amoor de Dee-er!"* And the Staff of the Scottish Division proceeded to sing with the utmost solemnity, keeping their eyes fixed upon the young Frenchman:

"For he's a jolly good fellow,
And so say all of us. . . ."

Aurelle was deeply moved as he gazed at the friendly faces round him, and reflected sadly that he was about to leave for ever the little world in which he had been so happy. General Bramble was standing gravely at attention, and singing as solemnly as if he were in his pew in church:

"For he's a jolly good fellow,
And so say all of us. . . ."

Then came much cheering, glasses were drained at a gulp, and young, rosy-cheeked

Dundas shouted, "Speech, Messiou, speech!"

"Come, Aurelle," said Colonel Parker, "don't you believe you're going to get out of it as easily as all that! You must get on your hind legs, my boy, and do your bit."

. . . . .

"Ah, Messiou," said the general when the ceremony was over and the brandy had followed the port, "I hope our two nations will remain friends after this war."

"How could it possibly be otherwise, sir? We cannot forget ——"

"The duration of our friendship," Colonel Parker put in, "depends neither on you, Aurelle, nor on us. The Englishman as an individual is sentimental and loyal, but he can only afford the luxury of these noble sentiments because the British nation is imbued with a holy selfishness. Albion is not perfidious, in spite of what your countrymen used to say; but she cannot tolerate the existence of a dominant power on the Continent. We love you dearly and sin-

cerely, but if you were to discover another Napoleon . . ."

"Humph!" grunted the general, greatly shocked. "Have some more brandy, Messiou?"

"Everything will be all right," said the doctor cynically. "Your cotton goods will always cost more than ours, and that is the surest guarantee of friendship."

"Why should they cost more?" carelessly asked Aurelle, in whose brain the brandy was beginning to produce a pleasant misty feeling.

"My boy," said the doctor, "your Napoleon, of whom Parker is so afraid, said we were a nation of shopkeepers. We accept the compliment, and our only regret is that we are unable to return it. You have three national failings which will always prevent you from being dangerous commercial competitors: you are economical, you are simple and you are hard-working. That is what makes you a great military people;

the French soldiers got accustomed to the hardship of trench life far more readily than ours. But in peace-time your very virtues betray you. In that famous woollen stocking of yours you hoard not only your francs but your initiative; and your upper classes, being content with bathrooms which our farmers would disdain, feel no call to go out and cultivate Indo-China. We never invest a penny; so our children have no alternative but to go out Empire-building. We must have comfort, which compels us to be audacious; and we are extremely lazy, which makes us ingenious."

At this point General Bramble began to emit the series of grunting noises which invariably preceded his favourite anecdotes.

"It is quite true," he said proudly, "that we are lazy. One day, just after we had made an advance near Cambrai, and the position was still uncertain, I sent out an aviator to fly over a little wood and report

whether the troops that occupied it were French, British or German. I watched him executing my order, and when he came back he told me the troops were British. 'Are you quite certain?' I asked, 'you didn't go very low.' 'It was not necessary, sir. I knew if those men had been busy digging trenches, I should have been uncertain whether they were French or German; but as they were sitting on the grass, I'm sure they are British.'"

It was ten o'clock. The aide-de-camp poured out a whisky and soda for his general. A silence ensued, and in the kitchen close by the orderlies were heard singing the old war ditties, from "Tipperary" to "The Yanks are coming," as was their nightly custom. They made a fine bass chorus, in which the officers joined unconsciously.

The singing excited Dundas, who began to yell "view-halloos" and smack a whip he took down from the wall. The doctor

found a Swiss cowbell on the mantelpiece and rang it wildly. Colonel Parker took up the tongs and began rapping out a furious fox-trot on the mantelshelf, which the general accompanied from his arm-chair with a beatific whistle.

Of the end of the evening Aurelle had but a blurred remembrance. Towards one o'clock in the morning he found himself squatting on the floor drinking stout beside a little major, who was explaining to him that he had never met more respectable women than at Port Said.

Meanwhile Dundas started to chant a ditty about the virtues of one notorious Molly O'Morgan; Colonel Parker repeated several times, "Aurelle, my boy, don't forget that if Englishmen can afford to make fools of themselves, it is only because England is such a devilishly serious nation;" and Dr. O'Grady, who was getting to the sentimental stage, sang many songs of his native land in a voice that was full of tears.

CHAPTER XVII

LETTER FROM COLONEL PARKER TO AURELLE

"Tout homme de courage est homme de parole."—CORNEILLE.

STAPLETON HALL, STAPLETON, KENT.
April—, 1920.

MY DEAR AURELLE, — Much water has passed beneath the bridges since your last letter. For one thing, I have become a farmer. When I left my staff job I thought of rejoining my old regiment; but it wasn't easy, as the battalion is crammed full of former generals who are only subalterns.

They are treating the army very unfairly here. Our damned Parliament refuses to vote it any money; very little is required of it, it's true — it has merely to maintain

order in Ireland and to guard the Rhine, Mesopotamia, India, Egypt, Turkey, Palestine, Silesia, the Caucasus and a few other countries the names of which I can't remember! All I can say is, God help England!

We farmers also can do with His help. April is the month for sowing, and fine weather is necessary. As far as I am concerned, I had a hundred acres of potatoes to sow, and I had made detailed preparations for my spring offensive. But, as always happens when the poor British start attacking, rain began falling in bucketfuls the very first day of operations. The advance had to be stopped after a few acres, and public opinion is really much exercised about the matter.

Now I want to answer your letter. You say, " Some of you in England seem astonished that we refuse to trust the Germans. We are accused of a lack of generosity. What a splendid piece of unconscious humour! I'd like to see you in our shoes —

suppose there were no sea between those chaps and yourselves!"

My dear Aurelle, I have often asked you not to confuse the English people with their cursed Puritans. There have always been in this country a large number of men who have done their best to destroy the strength and reputation of our Empire. Up to the time of good Queen Bess, these scoundrels were kept in their place, and I often regret I was not born in those times. Since then the Puritan element has on every occasion displayed its narrow-mindedness and its hatred of patriotism and of everything beautiful and joyous. The Puritans prefer their opinions to their country, which is an abominable heresy. They brought the civil wars upon us at the time of the Stuarts; they helped the rebels during the American War of Independence and the French during their Revolution. They were pro-Boers in the South African War, conscientious objectors in this one, and now they are sup-

porting the republican murderers in Ireland, trying to undermine the British workman's faith in his King and county cricket, and doing their best to encourage the Germans by creating difficulties between France and ourselves.

But you must not forget that the magnificent indifference and ignorance of our race make these pedants quite harmless.

You ask me what the average British citizen thinks about it all. Well, I'm going to tell you.

What interests the average British citizen beyond everything is the match between England and Scotland, which is to be played next Saturday at Twickenham, the Grand National, which is to be run next week at Liverpool, and Mrs. Bamberger's divorce, which fills the newspapers just now.

What does the British citizen think? Well, he went to the war without knowing what it was all about, and he has come back from it without having gathered any fur-

ther information. As a matter of fact, he is beginning to wonder who won it. You say it was Foch, and we are quite ready to believe you; still, it seems to us that our army had a little to do with it. The Italians say *they* struck the decisive blow; so do the Serbians and the Portuguese, of course. The Americans go about wearing little badges in their buttonholes which proclaim, "*We* did it." Ludendorff claims that the German army won the war. I am beginning to ask myself whether *I* was not the victor. As a matter of fact, I'm inclined to think it was you. You kept the Infant Dundas quiet; if you hadn't repressed him, he would have kept General Bramble from working; the general would have been nervous at the time of the attack in April '18, and all would have been lost.

As to international politics I have very little to tell you. I am observing the bucolic mind, and am noticing with some anxiety that the brain of the countryman is very

much like the turnip he grows with such perseverance. I am hoping I shall not also develop any vegetable characteristics.

You ask whether we are forgetting France. I don't think we are. Do you know that we were ready to remit your war debts if America had agreed? Not so bad for a nation of shopkeepers, is it? We don't brag about our devotion, but we will be with you if anything goes wrong. I trust you know us well enough to be quite assured of that.

I am very busy this morning with my favourite sow, who has just borne a litter of twelve. She immediately squashed one of them; King Solomon was not such a clever judge as he looked, after all. Au revoir.

CHAPTER XVIII

GENERAL BRAMBLE'S RETURN

"The English have a mild aspect and a ringing, cheerful voice."
—EMERSON.

"BY Jove," said the Infant Dundas, "this Paris of yours *is* a jolly town."

Beltara the painter had invited Aurelle to spend an evening in his studio to meet General Bramble, who was passing through Paris on his way to Constantinople, accompanied by Dundas and Dr. O'Grady.

The general was sitting on a divan piled high with many-coloured cushions, and gazing with emotion upon the sketch of a nude figure. The Greek heads, Etruscan warriors and Egyptian scribes about him had the rare and spiritual beauty of mutilated

things. Aurelle gazed at his old chief as he sat motionless among the statues, and consecrated the brief moment of silence to the memory of his virtues.

"A fine woman," exclaimed the general, "a very fine woman indeed! What a pity I can't show you a few Soudan negresses, Beltara!"

Beltara interrupted him to introduce one of his friends, Lieutenant Vincent, a gunner with a frank, open face. The general, fixing his clear gaze on Aurelle, tried to speak of France and England.

"I'm glad, Messiou, that we've come to an understanding at last. I'm not very well up in all this business, but I can't stand all these bickering politicians."

Aurelle was suddenly conscious of the general's real sincerity and anxiety about the future. Lieutenant Vincent came up to them. He had the rather wild, attractive grace of the present-day youth. As he sat listening to General Bramble's words about

English friendship, his lips parted as though he was burning to break in.

"Will you allow me, sir," he suddenly interrupted, "to tell you how we look at it. Frankly speaking, you English were marvellous during the war, but since the Armistice you have been on the wrong tack entirely. You are on the wrong tack because you don't know the Germans. Now I've just come back from Germany, and it is absolutely clear that as soon as those fellows have enough to eat they'll fall on us again. *You* want to get their forgiveness for your victory. But why should they accept their defeat? Would you accept it in their place?"

"The sense of shame after victory," said the doctor gently, "is a sentiment quite natural to barbarous peoples. After employing the utmost cruelty during the fight, they come and implore their slaughtered enemies' pardon. 'Don't bear us a grudge for having cut off your heads,' they say; 'if

we had been less lucky you would have cut off ours.' The English always go in for this kind of posthumous politeness. They call it behaving like sportsmen. It's really a survival of the 'enemy's taboo.'"

"It would be quite all right," put in Lieutenant Vincent breathlessly, "if you waited to appease the shades of your enemies till you were quite certain they were really dead. But the Germans are very much alive. Please understand, sir, that I'm speaking absolutely without hate. What I mean is that we must destroy Carthage — that is German military power — so completely that the very idea of revenge will appear absurd to any German with an ounce of common sense. As long as there exists at any time the barest chance of an enterprise, they will attempt it. I don't blame them in the least for it; in fact I admire them for not despairing of their country; but our duty — and yours too — is to make such an enterprise impossible."

"Yes," said the general in rather feeble French; "but you can't hit a man when he's down, can you?"

"It's not a question of being down, sir. Do you know that the three big gunpowder factories in Germany pay a dividend of fifteen per cent.? Do you know that Krupp is building a factory in Finland in order to escape our supervision? Do you realize that in ten years, if we don't keep an eye on their chemical factories, the Germans will be able to wage a frightful war against us, and use methods of which we haven't the slightest inkling? Now why should we run this risk when we are clearly in a position to take all precautions for some years to come? Carthage *must* be destroyed, sir. Why, just look at Silesia. . . ."

"Every one's talking about Silesia," said the Infant Dundas. "What *is* it, really?"

Vincent, waving his arms despairingly,

went to the piano and played a long, sad phrase of Borodin, the one which is sung by the recumbent woman just before Prince Igor's dances. Before Aurelle's eyes floated Northern landscapes, muddy fields and bleeding faces, mingling with the women's bare shoulders and the silk embroideries in the studio. He was suddenly seized by a healthy emotion, like a breath of fresh air, which made him want to ride across the wide world beside General Bramble.

"Doctor, can't we remain 'musketeers'?" he said.

"Can't be done," said the doctor sarcastically, "till this damned peace ends."

"You hateful person!" said Beltara. "Will you have a whisky and soda?"

"What!" exclaimed the general joyfully, "you've got whisky in the house, here, in France?"

"It is pleasant to notice," said the doctor, "that the war has been of some use after all. Your whisky, Beltara, quite re-

assures me about the League of Nations. As the Entente is necessary to the safety of our two countries, the responsibility of preserving good relations ought to be given to doctors and psychologists. Such experts would make it their business to cultivate those sentiments which tend to unite two countries into one. They would remind people, by means of noise and military ceremonies, of the great things they had achieved together. England would be represented at these functions, as she is in the minds of most Frenchmen, by Scotchmen and Australians. Bagpipes, kilts, bugles and tam-o'-shanters are far better diplomatists than ambassadors are. Pageants, dances, a few sentimental anecdotes, exchanges of song, common sports, common drinks — these are the essence of a good international policy. The Church, which is always so wise and so human, attaches as much importance to works as to faith. The outward signs of friendship are much more important than

friendship itself, because they are sufficient to support it."

"Beltara," said the general, "will you ask your friend to play the 'Destiny Waltz' for Messiou?"

Once more the familiar strains rang out, and brought to mind the years of stress and happy comradeship.

"Aurelle, do you remember Marguerite at Amiens — oh, and those two little singers at Poperinghe whom I used to call Vaseline and Glycerine? They sang English songs without understanding a word, with the funniest accent in the world."

"And the Outersteene innkeeper's pretty daughters, Aurelle? Did you ever see them again?"

"Goodness knows where they're got to, sir; Outersteene isn't rebuilt yet."

"You never got to Salonica, did you? We had Mirka there; a fine pair of legs she had too!"

Meanwhile the Infant Dundas had dis-

covered that Lieutenant Vincent played tennis, and had struck up a firm friendship. Taking hold of a palette, he began to explain a few strokes. "Look here, old man, if you cut your service towards the right, your ball will spin from right to left, won't it?"

Vincent, who had been somewhat reserved at first, was melting, like so many others, before the youthful charm of the Happy Nation.

Soon echoes of the hunt were heard in the studio, and Aurelle received full upon his person an orange that spun from right to left.

General Bramble took out his watch and reminded Aurelle he was taking the Orient Express. Beltara escorted him to the door, and Aurelle, Vincent and the Infant followed behind.

"I like the Vincent boy," said the general to his host. "He's a splendid fellow,

really, splendid! When he came in, I thought he was English."

Aurelle wished them a pleasant journey.

"Well, good-bye, Dundas. It was nice seeing you again. I suppose you're jolly glad you're going to Constantinople? I rather envy you."

"Yes," said the Infant, "I'm quite bucked about it, because the general who was there before us is leaving us a house that's got up in absolutely British style; there's a bathroom and a tennis-court. So I'll be able to go on practising my overhead service. Splendid, isn't it?"

They exchanged greetings and good wishes. The stars were shining in a moonless sky. On the pavement in the avenue they heard the aide-de-camp changing his step to fit his general's. The door closed upon them.

In the gallery, in front of the green

bronze warriors with their large, staring eyes, the three Frenchmen looked at one another, and the corners of their mouths twitched with the same friendly smile.

THE END

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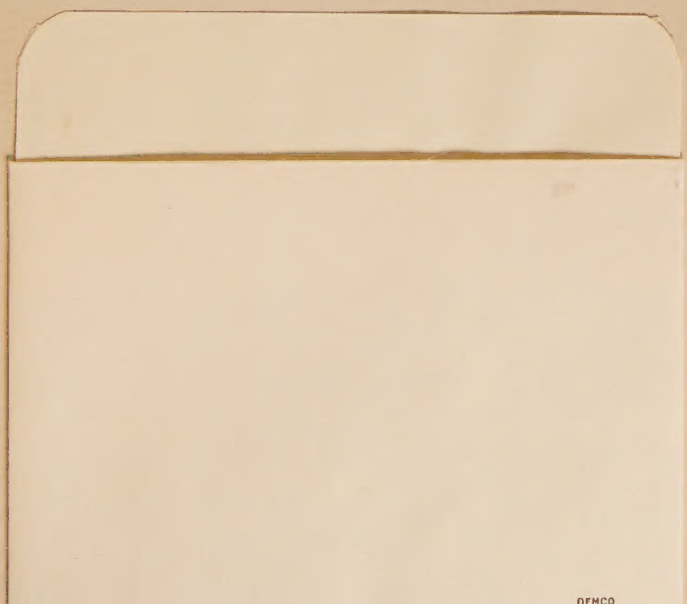

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